

Who Would Be Free

Marian Spitzer



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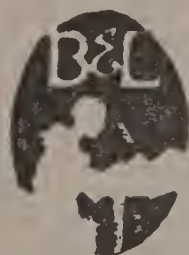
BY

MARIAN SPITZER

Hereditary bondsmen! Know ye not

Who would be free, themselves must strike the blow?

—BYRON.



BONI AND LIVERIGHT
PUBLISHERS :: :: NEW YORK

1924

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To H. T.

WHO IS, ANYWAY, MY SEVEREST CRITIC

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BOOK I

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WHO WOULD BE FREE

CHAPTER I

Belief tickets

I

You have here declared your belief in the Almighty and this Temple is Mount Sinai. Are you prepared to cling to the living God?

We gladly declare our trust in Divine Providence. May it grow with our growth and strengthen with our strength.

ELEANOR HOFFMAN murmured the words of her declaration in unison with the twenty-eight other girls and boys of the confirmation class. To the congregation of the Central Park Synagogue, foregathered to witness its young being formally entered into the fold, the words were plainly audible, spoken with a commendable fervor. Eleanor Hoffman, standing on the holy altar, giving herself to God, somehow couldn't hear what she was saying. She was nervous, of course. Who wouldn't be, with the Floral Offering? So important, too; the most important part of the whole service, and almost the last thing on the program.

Was she sure of the words? She went over them hurriedly in her mind. Her turn was coming soon. As soon as these endless questions and answers were over. Eleanor had had no idea it would be like this. At rehearsals it had all seemed so simple and easy, and quick. This dragged so. Most of the kids were scared stiff, but

they said their pieces pretty well at that. She'd only half listened, though. She had been saying the Floral Offering over to herself for hours, it seemed. Lucky thing it was in verse form. So much easier to remember that way. It wasn't bad either. Its rhyme and meter were correct which was more than you could say for last year's Floral Offering, when Therese Landauer had it. Well, Therese was stupid. She'd only got it because her father had given a lot of money to the temple.

This was different. Dr. Hirschberg, who was a dear if you only understood him, had said emphatically at the beginning of the term, that the Floral Offering and the Closing Prayer would go to those girls who earned them. That was his way of letting them know right at the beginning that he would play no favorites. It would be hard for him to steer away from trouble, though, she had decided at the time. The class had an unusual number of important girls in it. Or rather, girls with important families. There was Claire Rubin, for instance, whose father was on the Board of Trustees. And Helen Adler, whose aunt, Miss Isabelle Adler, was the principle of the Central Park Synagogue Sunday School. And Beatrice Kirchberg, whose grandfather had only recently given several thousand dollars toward the mortgage fund. Every one of them wanted the Floral Offering, and everyone felt pretty sure of getting it.

But Dr. Hirschberg had let them know in the beginning that only merit would win. Probably he knew that if he gave it to one of those three he'd make worse enemies of the other two than he would if he gave it to someone outside altogether. And if it were really a question of merit, there wasn't a chance for

Claire or Helen or Beatrice. The first two were pretty stupid, and Beatrice, who was intelligent enough, had an impediment in her speech.

Eleanor had made up her mind in the very beginning that she would get the Floral Offering. There wasn't anyone in the class who could recite any better than she could, except maybe Fay Wallberg, and Fay had confided her intention of going after the Closing Prayer.

"It's the very last thing on the program," Fay had said, "and they'll remember it the longest. The Floral Offering is good, and looks more stunning, but it comes before the sermon, and they'll forget it. You go after that, Elly, and I'll cop off the Closing Prayer." She had copped it off, too, and now she was standing next to Eleanor, on the red carpeted platform, turned toward the Ark, and speaking her rejoinders in the lovely, thrilling voice for which she was noted.

Eleanor wondered, quite without malice, whether Fay had taken elocution lessons for this part of the service, too. She had studied her Closing Prayer with Mr. Ash, who when he wasn't teaching in the Sunday School, was head of the Oral English Department at Nathan Hale High School. Fay had all kinds of beauty, and she was clever, too. She was going on the stage some day, although her family was throwing fits at the very idea.

She had a kind of actressy manner, and did her Closing Prayer in a very dramatic fashion. Eleanor couldn't hope to compete with her on that score, so she decided to play the opposite extreme. Very simple. No fireworks or bombast. There was a certain quality she could get into her voice that subtly suggested whiteness, purity. It was more in keeping with the dresses and the flowers and the occasion. She wondered how she'd do it.

She *must* do well. Everyone expected her to. Her mother, when she had kissed her good-by at the temple gates earlier in the morning, had said, with tears in her eyes:

"I know you'll do me proud, darling." And her sister, Muriel, who was standing on the same altar, offering those same declarations to God, had laughed.

"Of course, she'll do you proud. For the honor of the family. It wouldn't do to have two like me in one household." Muriel was a good kid, she never minded what honors anybody else got. So long as she didn't have to work hard for them herself. She had said her piece at the very beginning of the ceremony, so her nervous tension, if there'd been any for her, was now over. Not that Muriel ever got nervous about anything. Funny, how unlike they were and still how well they got along together. For sisters it was wonderful. Everybody marvelled at it. Most sisters fought so. But the Hoffmans never had. From the time they were babies they had done everything together, even though Eleanor was a year, almost to the day, older than Muriel. Mrs. Hoffman had felt it would be awfully nice for them to grow up together and do everything at the same time. So she had kept Eleanor out of school until Muriel was old enough to start, and they had gone along side by side ever since. It was nice. They both liked it. Eleanor knew that Muriel, from the far side of the altar, was waiting almost as anxiously for the Floral Offering as she was. Would it never come?

2

*There has been instilled into you the vital difference
between right and wrong, the obligations to your parents*

and your fellowmen. "See now I set before you this day life and good, death and evil." Will you choose the good?

We solemnly promise to give heed to every duty that meets us and ever to listen to the still small voice of conscience—the voice of God within us; as expressed in these words of Scripture—"He hath told thee, O man, what is good and what does the Lord thy God require of thee, only to do justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God."

They had rehearsed this question and answer probably two dozen times. It was rather long, and the boys and girls hadn't memorized it very well. Dr. Hirschberg had made them go over it and over it until he was sure they had it right. Yet not until this moment had its full meaning obtruded itself upon Eleanor's consciousness. Rather a large order. It couldn't be quite that simple to distinguish between right and wrong, good and evil. If it really were there'd be no need for religion at all.

"Life and good, death and evil." It wasn't always like that, either, Eleanor felt sure. People often did bad things and got away with them. And how many times, that she actually knew of, were people punished when they hadn't done anything wrong. Of course, there was always an answer for that. "The Lord chasteneth the child he loves." And others. "The ways of the Lord are past finding out." That was what her mother always said when she asked embarrassing questions.

But there was more to it than that, and she wasn't altogether satisfied with the things she'd been told all along and particularly since Miss Blaine, the Vocational guide at Wadleigh High School, had given her *The*

Way of All Flesh to read. Miss Blaine, who was interested in Eleanor, was sorry later that she'd let her have the book. It was pretty dangerous stuff for fifteen year olds, especially fifteen year olds who were trying to think. They would likely bolt the book and swallow it whole.

And it wasn't, Eleanor confessed to herself, the most soothing reading for a person on the verge of confirmation into the Jewish faith, especially when that person has come to be a little uncertain about the whole thing anyway. She almost wished she hadn't read it. Perhaps it was *The Way of All Flesh* that was cheating her out of the spiritual exaltation she had hoped and expected to experience on confirmation day. It most certainly was something. Maybe it was Ted Levine. Some of the things he had said to her in the country last summer had come back to her with amazing clarity during the past few days. It had started when she had found him in the summer house reading a volume of Robert Ingersoll. Ted was an awful show-off, of course, and his atheism was mostly pose. Eleanor realized that. Yet that day in the summer house, when they'd got to arguing on the subject, he had dropped most of his mannerisms. He seemed really sincere.

"You *can't* believe all that bunk, Elly," he had flung out at length. "You *can't*. You're too intelligent." And he had given her one of his Ingersoll books to read, and it had seemed quite convincing. She never finished it, though, because her mother found it in her room and made her give it back. She didn't want any of this atheistic nonsense to get into Elly's head. It was bad business.

Not that Eleanor had turned away from God. Oh,

no. She reassured herself vehemently. But things were rather mixed up in her mind, and the confirmation service wasn't thrilling her the way she wanted it to. Maybe when she got to her own part the feeling of exaltation would come. She looked down at her bouquet to see if the little square of paper with the words of her poem typewritten on it was securely fastened to the stalks. Yes, it was all right. She was quite safe. Even if she did forget the words she could read them and no one would know the difference. Her flowers would be right on top, and she would be looking down, anyway. Oh, if it were only over!

3

You have been instructed in the principles of the Jewish religion transmitted from our past ancestry and enriched with the riper truths of later ages. Are you prepared to treasure its spiritual message, to teach it by living it, to make sacrifice that its cause may prevail, and faithfully to hand it down to coming generations?

We accept the faith of Israel as did our fathers at Mount Sinai. We pray that it may never depart from us and we will strive so to live as to be worthy to become a kingdom of priests and a holy people.

Funny how you never paid any attention to these things when you said them over and over again for days at a time. That meant an awful lot, and it was a terrible responsibility. It was like the marriage ceremony, with its "until death us do part." Elly had been to a wedding not long ago and the marriage lines had frightened her. They were so terribly permanent. Even hearing them said, she felt as though some heavy weight had been placed suddenly upon her heart. And now this. Here

she was, standing up before a thousand or more people, on the altar of God Himself, pledging herself with solemn words to do something that might be impossible. It wasn't fair. You shouldn't have to commit yourself that way, if you weren't sure. It would be much better to study the confirmation service carefully and then get a chance to decide whether you were prepared to live according to its tenets. Or confirmation should not take place until you were grown up. Twenty-one, say. By that time, you'd have had a chance to figure things out. That is, if you were the figuring kind. She wondered whether the others were frightened at all by the promises they were so fervently making. Probably not. One or two, perhaps, but not more. Confirmation should be a voluntary thing, she concluded. Of course, you didn't have to be confirmed. There was no law about it. But it was a pretty arbitrary thing actually. You joined the class when you were fourteen, you spent a year learning the significance of the occasion, and you were confirmed. You could back out at the last minute, but it would be just about as scandalous and incredible as a bride saying, "I don't" instead of "I do." Or a nun running away from the convent just before she took her final vows. It had been done, of course. But the penalty was terrific. What would her mother do if she were to stand on the altar, and instead of reciting her poem, simply say:

"I can't do this, because I'm not sure I want to be confirmed. I'd rather wait a little while until everything is settled in my mind." Her brain stopped. She couldn't even summon up a picture of what would follow. Of course, she had no intention of doing it. But she did wish that she hadn't read *The Way of All Flesh*, at

least not until after confirmation. It was spoiling the day for her. When would they come to her!

When they did come to her it took a kick on the back of her chair from Alvin Wienberg, who sat behind her, to make her get up. The organ began to play very softly, and the girls filed slowly down the platform banking their white sweetpeas on the altar.

Last of all came Eleanor, placing her bouquet on top of all the others, with its little typewritten verses looking straight up at her. Now she wasn't nervous at all. She was quite calm, and acutely aware of everything around her. The sweetpeas did look better. Dr. Hirschberg had wanted them to go out into the country and pick daisies. It was so much more appropriate to the occasion, he said. But the girls rebelled. They had too much to do the day before confirmation to waste time going down to the country. There were last minute fittings and hair curlings and manicures to be attended to. And arrangements for parties, and dozens of other unavoidable things. They would get sweetpeas from a neighboring florist. Dr. Hirschberg, who recognized defeat when he met it, bowed to the inevitable. Sweetpeas it was. And Eleanor was glad. They looked purer and sweeter than daisies. Daisies had yellow centers, and confirmation was pure white. But she must begin. Her mother was looking up at her from the center of the second row, staring intently into her face, waiting for her to begin. She began, hardly recognizing her own voice which seemed to come from somebody else. She bent her eyes to the flowers, then looked straight out to the audience . . . no, it was a congregation . . . why did she always think of it as an audience? and spoke:

“We come before Thee ’neath this temple dome,
Oh, God, our Father on this festal day,
To homage do unto Thy law divine
And blossoms sweet upon Thine altar lay.”

And so on for four verses. It would be all over in a moment. She hadn't looked once at the paper before her, and now she had reached the end of the last quatrain. There was a summing up couplet. She felt rather proud of that couplet. It gave distinction to the poem. She raised her eyes for a fleeting instant, paused perceptibly, and concluded:

“Under Thy will Oh God, thus we shall trend
Striving to earn Thy favor to the end.”

Another tiny pause, an inclination of her head, to let them know it was over. Utter silence for a moment, then a buzz, faint at first but increasing in volume. Like a swarm of bees suddenly let loose. In the instant before she turned to go back to her seat, there was a flash of a dozen heads turned toward her mother in the second row, nodding, smiling, almost applauding. She had been all right, then. That was a relief. Thank goodness it was over.

Back in her seat Fay Wallberg squeezed her hand. “You were wonderful,” she said. “I hope I'll do as well. Listen to them, they're crazy about you.” It was true. The people were still turning to each other and buzzing with approval. Then the crash of the organ as the choir burst into song drowned out all other sound.

The sermon was mercifully short. It was almost exactly like all the other confirmation sermons Eleanor had ever heard. All about the pure white blossoms and the

beginning of pure white lives. And carrying the spirit of Judaism out into the world, and doing right to others and respecting one's parents. There must be quite a tendency toward disrespecting one's parents, Eleanor thought, or they wouldn't harp on it so. How much this was like *The Way of All Flesh*. All religions were pretty much alike, apparently, except for details of ceremonial. She found herself suddenly wondering about dinner. She was hungry. At breakfast she had been too excited to eat, and the services were longer than she expected. It must be nearly one o'clock. She wouldn't change places with Fay for anything in the world. Fay was getting ready to go up. Now, at last. The Closing Prayer was started. How beautifully she recited. Like a professional. She knew just when to pause most effectively, and how to shade off her lovely voice. Mr. Ash had taught her that. The audience . . . no, the congregation . . . was spellbound, a hush had fallen over it. At length the end came. A long pause, and then an almost inaudible "amen." Fay walked slowly back to her place. The buzz again, mounting in one or two places to a sob. Now Eleanor squeezed Fay's hand. "You were perfect," she said.

"Oh, gee," whispered Fay, "we were the best of all."

Another blank space. Then suddenly a few seats from her one lone girl stood up. People were standing up here and there throughout the temple. Dr. Rosenthal, the Cantor, was reading in Hebrew. Oh, yes, the prayer for the dead. Poor little Jeannette Sachs. Her mother dead only a month, and she had to go through with this whole trying thing. They had been so close, too. It had been Mrs. Sachs's last wish for Jeannette to go on with the confirmation anyway. And now she was stand-

ing there silently sobbing, twisting her handkerchief and making futile little dabs at her eyes. It was cruel. How could you be happy when someone else was so miserable?

More music. More Hebrew. How hungry she was. She could eat a house. And they'd have to stand around at least half an hour being congratulated. Ah! Now the benediction. They filed slowly to the back of the platform, stopped for a moment before Dr. Hirschberg, to receive his blessing. He muttered something in Hebrew and then in English. They were equally unintelligible. How heavy his hands were on her head. No wonder he had told them not to wear hair ribbons. He'd rumple them all to pieces.

Off the platform. Up the center aisle. It was all over at last. What a relief! Now the double line broke up and people began to swarm about, kissing, congratulating. Her mother, with an arm around each of her girls, sobbing quite loudly and without shame.

"Oh, my darlings, you were wonderful." And she kissed them both. Their father, less inclined to demonstration, contented himself with patting them on the shoulder.

"You did very well my dears, both of you." Muriel laughed again. She was a good sport.

"You're so good to me," she giggled, "putting me in the same class with Elly. You were great, kid. Much better than Fay. I swear! She was too theatrical. That's what everybody says."

There was a great crowd waiting on the street outside. Uncles, aunts, cousins, friends. There must be hundreds. All talking and gesticulating together. Words came out and separated themselves from the babel. "Wonderful."

“Marvelous.” “Like an angel, the way she stood there.”
“So simple and sweet.”

It was awfully tiring, although gratifying. Finally a taxi came and took them away from the noise. Eleanor didn't talk much during the ride home. Muriel chattered and laughed. She didn't feel tired at all. Not a nerve in her system, that girl. Always jolly and good-natured. Nothing ever bothered her. Great disposition. Not like Elly. You never could tell when she'd go off into a fit about something. Yet there was never any friction between them. It just goes to show what a little real training can do. Mrs. Hoffman had never let them quarrel. She had taught them that sisters must be kind to each other, and make little sacrifices. If you train your children right they'll grow up right. “As the twig is bent.” What was that saying?

CHAPTER II

I

THERE was a family dinner. The Hoffmans weren't wealthy by any means, but they were comfortable. And confirmation was something that happened only once in a lifetime, so they were doing things right. And anyway, both girls being confirmed at the same time, weren't they saving money? The girls were having a party for their own friends the following Monday night. But this day was the family's day. There were thirty-two at the dinner table. All but four were of the immediate family. There had been some discussion as to the advisability of inviting any outsiders, but Mrs. Hoffman was adamant in her determination to have the Weinbergs and the Kates. They were her best friends, closer to her by a great deal than any of her relatives. Either they would be present or there would be no party.

Well, it was her party, really, not Elly's or Muriel's. She could have anyone she liked. Besides, it developed later, Henry Katz, who was a very talented song writer (it was his avocation—his vocation was real estate) had written new words to the tune of "The Rosary," which he dedicated to Eleanor and Muriel. Aunt Rose, who had a really good voice, sang it after the speeches had been made. It was very clever, and yet moving. Aunt Rose sang it with real feeling. Henry Katz accompanied at the piano. He had a very sympathetic touch.

“As at the altar on this day
You faced the dear ones whom you love,
And in devotion you stood there to pray
To him above, to Him above!

You vowed to Him you'd keep sincere
The ten commandments taught to you,
Until before him you'd appear,
You'd keep them well and true!

Honor your parents and adore,
Show them respect, show them your love,
The Lord will then protect you evermore,
You vowed you would, dear ones, to Him above!”

The applause was tremendous. So loud, in fact, that no one but her father, sitting next to her, heard Eleanor sob as Aunt Rose sang the concluding lines.

“What's the trouble, my pet?” he asked her. Eleanor sobbed again in reply.

“You wouldn't understand,” she blurted out, and she got up blindly from the table and ran from the room. She locked herself in the bathroom and ruined a perfectly good hand-embroidered show towel with her tears. Her mother followed her, but Eleanor refused to let her in, and Mrs. Hoffman returned to the dining room, flushed but not altogether displeased.

“She's so high strung,” Mrs. Hoffman explained. “Just like me. The song made her feel bad. It'll do her good to have a cry.”

“Too hysterical altogether,” grumbled Mr. Hoffman. “Young girls have no business to be that way. Go look after your sister, youngster,” turning to Muriel. She wasn't crying. You could rely on her not to lose her head.

Eleanor was on the way out when Muriel reached the bathroom.

"What's the matter, kid?" Muriel asked. "That song get you? Don't be a nut!" Elly laughed and cried together.

"I can't help it, I guess. But my nerves were pretty nearly gone before that. And that parent stuff just finished me. Why do they have to rub it in so? Make you feel like a criminal before you start! Does it hit you that way, too?" Muriel nodded.

"Yes, kind of. But I don't pay much attention to it. Come on now, your ice cream'll be melted." And arm in arm they returned to the dining room.

There was a reception after dinner. Mrs. Hoffman hadn't sent out any invitations, or put an announcement in the papers,—that was so vulgar—but she had told her friends that she would be home. People started coming at about three o'clock, and there was a steady stream of them all afternoon and all evening.

"Come inside and see our presents," she suggested to a group of girls, some of last year's confirmants who had come in together. Talking and giggling, they left the living room, and went into the girls' bedroom, where gifts of every description were piled on the twin beds, the white ivory dressing table, the chiffonier and the floor.

"Just think," said Eleanor breathlessly, "between us we've got five parasols already. And three pairs of silver shoe buckles."

"Oh, that's all right," said Muriel, "we can use the extra pair for sashes and belts. They have regular fasteners, like bar pins. You don't have to sew them on."

The hundred and more gifts, ranging from the tiniest of perfume atomizers from Cousin Jennie Krauskopf, who was a widow and sold knitted underwear for a living, to a huge and violently decorated bedroom floor lamp from Great-uncle Charlie Dorf, who was a brother of Mrs. Hoffman's mother, were separately examined and exclaimed over. There were dozens of pairs of silk stockings, and almost as many gloves.

"What we'll be able to save out of our allowance now," said Muriel. "We ought to get rich quick. Won't have to buy any gloves or stockings or underwear for years, if this keeps up. And there are lots of people we haven't heard from yet."

Toward evening some of the boys came in. There was Irving Houseman and Malcolm Friedmann and Bertram Klein. H. Bertram Klein to be exact, but he didn't use the H., which stood for Herman. Without these three boys no party of the younger Central Park Synagogue set was complete. They were the arbiters, and the planets around which the lesser stars revolved. If they came to see you, or walked home from Sunday School with you, you were safe. If not, your position was precarious. And they worked together. You had to merit the approbation of all three or it was unavailing.

The Hoffman girls were favored of "The Triumph-irate," as they called themselves. More than that, Eleanor enjoyed the particular favor of Irving Houseman. Irving was a serious person. He didn't care much for these frivolous girls, and Eleanor was serious too. They understood each other. She admired him very much. He wasn't silly. She could talk to him about the More Important Things of Life without fear of being thought a highbrow.

Muriel couldn't see it at all. She preferred Malcolm. He was a marvelous looking boy, tall, dark with a kind of smooth, creamy darkness. He had large warm brown eyes. And what dimples! Malcolm liked Muriel, too. A gay girl. You could always count on her to have a good time. She wasn't moody. Eleanor was more intellectual, but that was just the trouble. Too darn high-brow for Malcolm. And Muriel was much prettier, too.

There was some anxiety on the part of the girls about their party, which was to take place on the following Monday evening. It would be a week of parties. Fay Wallberg had Saturday, they had Monday, Hilda Adler had Wednesday and Dorothy Bloom had Thursday. It would be a great week. But Muriel was worried. Her mother had been getting obstreperous about Juliette Heller.

"She wants to wish that little simp on us," Muriel told the boys. "You know how she ruins every party. We told mother that we'd rather not have any party than have her. But Mrs. Heller's such an old friend that mother's afraid she'll be mad. You know how those things always come up?"

"Well," said Bertram, weighing the situation, "prob'ly if you don't say much about it, your mother'll forget, and then you can get away with it."

"You don't know mother," sighed Elly. "She never forgets anything you want her to. And she's been talking about Lawrence Weinlander. *His* mother's a friend of hers, too. But I positively won't have him. He wears short pants. Imagine having a boy with short pants at the party. Can you hear everybody laughing at him? And at us, when they see him. I simply won't stand for it. It'll be too embarrassing. Why, a couple

of weeks ago we walked home from temple with them, and I had to walk in front with that little shrimp. And more people saw us. I was so fussed I nearly died. And a couple of days later in school Amy Koenig asked me who he was. She said she thought I never went out with boys in short pants. She wouldn't believe me when I explained. It was disgusting. I simply will not have that little brat, and that's all there is to it. I told mother he'd have a rotten time. That may get her to shut up. I hope so."

It was seven o'clock. They didn't sit down to the table to eat, just passed around plates and sandwiches and things. There were too many people. Elly felt awfully tired. She wished she could go to bed. Or out for a long ride in the country. It was so hot. And people were arguing. Mrs. Ira Hermann had said she didn't think it was right of Henry Katz to use "The Rosary" for the song he wrote.

"It's not that I'm so terribly religious," Mrs. Hermann said, "but after all this is a Jewish holiday, and that song is all about kissing the Cross and so forth. Do you think it was exactly right of him? Out of all the songs in the world did he have to pick out that one? *I don't know.*"

"But he didn't use the words. He only used the melody 'cause he could fit appropriate words to it," Mrs. Hoffman defended Henry, who had departed with his wife. "I think it was very nice. Henry wouldn't do anything wrong for the world. He's the most upright, honorable man I know. I hope nobody'll say anything to him about this. He's so sensitive. You know those artistic people. It's so easy to hurt their feelings."

Somewhere else in the room voices, indistinguishable

from the crowd, but loud and emphatic, were discussing the propriety of girls as young as Eleanor and Muriel "going with boys."

"I think it's a shame," one voice declared. "If you let girls do these things when they're so young what will there be left for them to do when they're a little older? I don't approve of this running around with fellows. It looks bad. And, anyway, they'll get blasé. I wouldn't let any daughter of mine go with boys until she was at least eighteen."

"That's foolish," came the reply. "You can talk that way, 'cause you have no daughters of your own. If you had you'd sing a different tune, believe me. Besides, how're you going to stop them? If you refuse to let them do it they'll turn around and do it behind your back. And, believe me, I'd rather know what my girls are doing. You never can tell what trouble young folks'll get into if their mothers don't know what they're up to. I think Mrs. Hoffman is very sensible to encourage the boys coming to the house. She doesn't want Elly and Muriel to run around much outside. But to have them go to each other's houses, that's perfectly all right. You can't go against human nature, you know. And girls are bound to like boys."

2

Eleanor was worried. She hadn't approached her mother yet on the subject of wearing her hair up at the parties. And it was essential that she wear her hair up. The leveling era of bobbed hair had not yet been inaugurated, and Elly's hair was not considered one of her strong points. It was straight and fine, not exactly sparse, but by no means luxuriant. It grew thickly

enough to her head, but the braid that hung down a few inches below her shoulders was inclined to be rather wispy. It was a funny color, too, Elly admitted, regarding it in her dressing table mirror. Red. But not the brilliant red that you could call Titian. (Henna had not come into vogue then, either.) Just a sort of cross between yellow and red, the kind of hair that people called strawberry blond or sorrel. She wore it parted on the side, and clasped in the back with a tortoiseshell barrette, very simply, with no attempt to curl it. She had tried turning the wispy braid up into a flat rolled knot and it was surprising how much better it looked that way. She appeared to have much more hair. And it made her look at least eighteen. Which, being fifteen and on the verge of five parties, was a consummation devoutly to be wished. There would be so many older boys at the parties. Some of them would even be as old as twenty-one. And it was imperative that Elly's hair should be up. She couldn't have a good time otherwise. She and Fay Wallberg had worked out a plan, and Elly was waiting now for her mother to come in so that she might try it out. She heard Mrs. Hoffman's footsteps in the hall, and quickly let down the negligible little braid. She gulped and took the plunge.

"Mother," she said, her voice filled with hesitancy, "I want to ask you something. Something important." She stopped.

"Well, what is it?"

"Well, it's about the parties. If Mrs. Wallberg lets Fay wear her hair up, will you let me wear mine up? Please, mom," as her mother started to reply. "It means so much to me. You want me to have a good time, don't you? And I can't have a good time if you make me go

with my hair down. Mrs. Wallberg said she would if you would." Mrs. Hoffman cocked her head reflectively.

"Well," she said, "I don't know. You know I don't approve of young girls wearing their hair up. It makes them old before their time, and gets them blasé. And if I let you do it this time you'll be after me every time there's another party. You'll be sorry when you're a few years older that you were in such a hurry to grow up. What difference does it make whether you wear it up or down? Everybody there knows your age, anyway, you can't fool them. No, I don't think you'd better, Eleanor. Besides, if I let you do it I'll have to let Muriel do it, and that is out of the question. What would people say, two little girls like you, with your hair up? You're too anxious to grow up. I don't like it. In fact I'm sorry I ever let you start going with boys! That's what put all these foolish notions into your head. When I was a girl there was no such thing. Young girls never asked their mothers to let them pretend to be grown up when they were only children. Why, if I'd asked my mother to let me do such a thing when I was fifteen years old she would've boxed my ears. We're too lenient with our children nowadays."

Eleanor sighed. When her mother began one of these speeches it was hard to tell where she'd end. But she didn't mind much, because that was the way Mrs. Hoffman worked off steam. Usually at the end of a tirade like that she gave in. Her own vehemence wore her out. Eleanor said nothing, waiting for the stream of language to die down. There was no use saying anything now, because it would simply give her mother more material. Anything she said would be used against her.

"I can't imagine," continued Mrs. Hoffman, "what the

world is coming to. Fifteen years old and wants to wear her hair up! Absurd. Well, I'll call up Mrs. Wallberg and if she lets Fay do it, maybe,—I'm only saying maybe, you understand, I'll let you do it too. But that'll only be for this week. You can't come trying to do it for every party after this. This week and that's all. Never again until you're seventeen. When you graduate from high school. That'll be time enough." She walked out of the room. Eleanor was jubilant. She had won her victory. As a matter of fact, she reflected, you could get anything out of mother if you only let her have her little spiel. She seemed to have a curious idea that by recording her objections to anything she didn't approve of, she had met the problem.

Eleanor told her sister about it later. Muriel only laughed at her for her pains.

"What a fool you are, Elly," she said. "If you had any sense you wouldn't say anything about it. You know how mother always carries on. Why don't you just shut up and do what you please? You can put your hair up after you get there. She'll never know the difference. That's what I'm going to do. It's so much simpler."

"No, it isn't," argued Eleanor. "It only seems simpler now. But it doesn't get you anywhere. I don't want to slip it over on her. Anyone could do that. I want to get her to give in. That's making real progress, don't you see?"

Muriel grinned.

"Oh, *hell*," she said, "I see. You just want to do anything to make it harder. Well, not for me."

Mrs. Hoffman, passing the room at this point, pushed open the door with some violence.

"Muriel," she said, "how many times do I have to tell you not to swear. I can't imagine where you pick up such language. Surely not from me or your father. God knows he's the most particular man in the world about the language he uses before his family. Never a bad word. I should think you'd get tired of having me correct you." The girls glanced swiftly at each other, only half suppressing the smiles that would come.

"That's right," continued their mother, "laugh at me now. I'd like to know what good I am around here, anyway! When I try to do anything to bring up my daughters like ladies, they laugh at me. No respect! I don't want any of your nonsense. Remember now," turning to Elly, "I haven't promised about your hair, and if you start any of your monkey business I won't let you go to the parties at all. I'm going to get respect from my children or I'll know the reason why!"

The smiles subsided and the girls looked grave, but did not reply. Mrs. Hoffman, stopping a moment to straighten the toilet articles on the dressing table, left the room, slamming the door behind her. The girls looked at each other again. Elly shrugged. Muriel laughed. Still they said nothing. Silently they undressed and went to bed.

CHAPTER III

I

THE week of partying was over. It had been a week of unmitigated joy for Muriel and Eleanor. They were tired but triumphant. They had worn their hair up, and all the new boys who met them thought they were at least seventeen, or would have if they hadn't known about the girls just being confirmed.

Muriel had made three dates with new ones, and Malcolm was angry.

"Don't you think he has a nerve?" she asked Eleanor rhetorically as they undressed slowly after the last of the parties. It was nearly two o'clock, but they weren't tired. "You'd think I was engaged to him or something." Eleanor looked at her seriously.

"Do you think you'll ever marry Malcolm?" she inquired earnestly.

"Well, I don't know," Muriel said. "The way I feel about it now, I think I'd like to, when I'm about eighteen. But you never can tell about a thing like that. I might change my mind. Of course, he's never said anything about getting married, but he's awfully jealous. He tried to kiss me last night."

"Did you let him?"

"No, I wanted to, but I was afraid. It's all right in games, but I think if you let a boy kiss you just . . . well, just for no reason at all, he won't have the same respect for you after that. Don't you think so?"

"Well, I don't know. I suppose not. Mother always

says they won't. But if you're engaged I guess it's different. Irving asked me to be engaged to him. Secretly, of course. You know, to wait until he is able to support me. He only has five more years until he's out of law school, and he says he could surely make enough to get married on after he was out a year."

Muriel, snapping an elastic around the end of her long, thick braid of chestnut hair, rolled into bed.

"Gee," she said, "that'd make you awfully old before you got married. Nearly twenty-one. I wouldn't wait that long for anyone. I want to be married before I'm nineteen. Turn out the light, will you?"

Eleanor switched off the light and pulled up the shade. The full moon, still high, shone in through the window. She sighed.

"That's not so long," she said, "Irving's got lots of brains. And he has the cutest eyes."

"Malcolm's better looking though. Aren't his dimples wonderful? He's the best looking boy in the crowd, don't you think so? And he's a wonderful dancer."

"Um."

"Gee, wouldn't mother be furious if she knew what we were talking about. Don't you suppose girls ever thought about boys when she was our age?"

"I don't know. She says she never did, but I think she just doesn't remember."

"What else is there to think about, anyway?" Silence. Then, after a few minutes came Eleanor's voice, hesitatingly:

"Muriel."

"Yeah?" sleepily.

"Do you believe in God?"

"*What?*"

"Do you really, or do you think maybe Ted is right, that it's just a myth to fool people?"

"Of course, I believe in God. How can you ask such a question! And just confirmed too. What's the matter with you anyway? You're getting kind of crazy lately. Ted is a nut, and he only talks that way to be different."

"Well, I know, but he says some awfully convincing things. He says . . ."

"Say, listen, don't start telling me what that nut says at this hour of the night. I'm sleepy, and we have to get to school in the morning." Silence . . . The clock strikes two-thirty.

"Elly, are you asleep?"

"No."

"What do you think I ought to give Malcolm for his birthday? It's next week."

"How much money have you got?"

"Five dollars."

"You could get a half dozen handkerchiefs with his monogram embroidered on. Real linen. That would be nice."

"Not too personal?"

"I don't think so. It isn't as if it were socks or something intimate like that."

"Well, will you go downtown with me to look for something?"

"All right, want to go to-morrow? We could cut gym and history and go down early."

"Sure. I hate gym in such hot weather, anyway. It doesn't really do you a bit of good. And study is a joke. That old fool Cass gives monologues through the whole period, anyway. She's a little crazy, I think."

"A *little*? She ought to be in an asylum. Emily

Brent's mother used to know her a long time ago, and she says she was always like that, even when she was young."

"How old do you think she is, about sixty?"

"I don't know. She looks a hundred."

"Emily says she was engaged to a man who was killed in the Spanish-American War."

"You mean the Civil War, don't you?"

"Looks more like it at that. I can't help feeling sorry for her, though. Can you imagine her the victim of a blighted romance? It seems so ridiculous that anyone ever wanted to kiss her."

"Look." Muriel thrust her hand from under her new pillow, and held up in the moonlight a little jeweler's box. "Malcolm's buckles. Aren't they lovely? I know it isn't right to accept jewelry from a man unless you're engaged to him, but you wouldn't exactly call slipper buckles jewelry, would you?"

"No-o-o, I guess not," mused Eleanor. "Anyway, Mrs. Friedmann knows mother so well, it's just as much her present as it is Malc's."

"It is not. He paid for them all himself. He told me so."

"Oh well, it's all right, anyway."

"Malc's wonderful," replacing the box under pillow. "I wish I were old enough to get married. Just think, wouldn't it be great to have your own apartment, with no one to boss you around or tell you what to do and where to go."

"But wouldn't you be afraid, though, at first?"

"Yeah. Scared to death. What do you think exactly happens?"

"I don't know. Leona Lowenthal's sister promised

to tell her after she came back from her honeymoon, and then she wouldn't. Said it was too sacred. Oh well, you'll find out some day." Silence . . . The clock ticks loudly, approaching three.

"Which party did you like the best?" asked Muriel, her voice grown sleepier.

"Fay's, I think. Ours was pretty good, but you never have much fun at your own party. Too much responsibility."

"Yes," sighed Muriel, "you've always got to be seeing that the others have a good time. But there's one thing about your own party,—you can sit next to the boy you want. I had a good time at Fay's, but that fresh little Beatrice Kohn flirted with Malcolm during supper, and tried to get him away from me. I don't think she's much good. She lets boys kiss her."

"Yes, I know. At Hilda's I was talking to Harold Katz, and he asked me if I knew her. I said yes, and he said she's s.m., isn't she? That was a new one on me, so I asked him what he meant, and he said some musher. He said all the boys call her that. It's a Delta Omega expression. Jack Lewison made it up."

"Oh, yes, she's fierce. I went through that little alcove, you know near the bedroom, to get my handkerchief, and she was sitting on the couch with Walter Weil, with her arms around his neck. They were kissing when I went in and they were kissing when I came back. Regular soul kiss. I don't think it gets a girl anything to let boys get fresh with her, do you? They don't respect her."

"Well, I don't think it's a good idea to let just anyone kiss you who wants to. But if you're sort of engaged I

think it's all right. I mean what's the good of being engaged if you can't have any fun?"

"Do you think it would be all right to let Malc kiss me?"

"Yes. Don't let mother know I said that. She'd kill me. But I don't see any reason why you shouldn't. You're crazy about him, aren't you?"

"Yes."

"And he's crazy about you. Well, that makes it all right. Why don't you get his fraternity pin? That would make you really engaged, even if you didn't want to announce it." Muriel giggled.

"Can you imagine! Engaged at fourteen and a half."

"Well, Juliet was married at that age."

"Juliet who?"

"Oh," impatiently, "in Romeo and Juliet."

"Well, that was just a play. But I would like to get his pin. I'd like to wear it to school. Can you imagine the girls? I'd like to put one over on Geraldine Nussbaum. She puts on so many airs because she's got a measly little Delta Omega pin. That's only a high school pin. If I came down with Malc's pin she'd throw a fit. I'll get it all right. Where you going?" as Elly pulled the bed-light ribbon and stepped on the floor.

"I want to show you something," she answered. "I wasn't going to, but I guess I will anyway. I promised Irving I wouldn't let anyone know, but—that doesn't mean your sister." And from a spring locked drawer in her dressing table, she drew a little piece of black ribbon, upon which was pinned a diamond shaped fraternity pin, set in tiny pearls, with three Greek letters inscribed in gold across its black surface. She handed it silently to Muriel.

"Gee!" Muriel regarded it solemnly. "You're a wonder. It's awfully hard to get freshmen to part with 'em. Oh, boy, if I get Malcolm's, and we wear 'em to school together, won't the girls be wild! It's bad enough now that we're the only ones in the gang who go with college boys—except Fay—but if we wear their frat pins that'll be the last straw."

"Don't say frat," Eleanor rebuked her sister. "That's so childish. Only the high school boys say frat. In college they say fraternity." Taking the pin back from Muriel she looked at it for several moments, polished it assiduously on a corner of the sheet, and pinned it securely to a fold of her nightgown.

"Irving's wonderful," she said drowsily. "So intellectual. Just think, he's just seventeen and he's finishing his first year in college. I bet he'll make Phi Beta Kappa."

"Who cares?" asked Muriel, answering herself. "You do, I suppose. Not me, though. He's too brainy for me. I don't want any highbrows hanging around. Just give me someone with lots of ginger, and a good dancer, and good looking, like Malcolm. You can have all the brains. Gee, I'm sleepy. Good-night." And with a prodigious yawn she turned over on her side, her hand under the pillow, her feet curled up under her. In a few minutes she was fast asleep.

2

Eleanor did not find sleep so quickly. There were so many things to wonder about even in the daytime when she was active and things were happening every minute, there was an undercurrent of wondering. And at night when the quiet and the darkness seemed to bring things out sharply in relief, the wondering was so intense that

it actually hurt. The night was to her a photographer's dark room. Impressions that she had caught fleetingly during the day were dipped into the fluid of silence and developed into definite prints. And always they made her wonder. Why? Why was everything?

She had always been that way. From infancy, almost, she had wanted to know why. And why seemed the hardest thing to find out. Once, when she was five years old her mother had found her playing on the street with the janitress's little boy. When her mother commanded her to stop she asked why.

"Because I am your mother and I say you should," Mrs. Hoffman had answered, slapping her smartly across the cheek.

She had kept on wondering why she shouldn't play with Freddie. He was so much fun to play with. But she never found out. She still wondered when it flashed across her mind out of the past. Probably because his mother was a janitress. But why shouldn't you play with the child of a janitress if you wanted to?

For a while Eleanor had tried talking to her father about these things she wondered about. He was sympathetic, but not satisfactory. She mustn't try to solve the riddle of the universe, he told her soothingly. Others had tried it and they invariably became lunatics. Or socialists or atheists or something equally uncomfortable.

"Don't think about such things," he said whenever she approached him tentatively. "Wiser heads than yours have lost their balance over just such thoughts. Don't you worry. The world will go right on even if you don't find out why." So that was out. Muriel only grinned when she said anything to her, and flung out her laughing

"who cares?" That was Muriel's summing up of life, her answer to every question.

Muriel, thought Eleanor, looking at her sleeping sister, was lucky. She was pretty, by far the prettier of the two, Eleanor decided for the hundredth time. Her hair was chestnut while Elly's was that odd, indeterminate red, and it was thick and wavy. Elly's was thoroughly straight and there wasn't a great deal of it. Muriel had a brilliant complexion. Her cheeks were so red that some malicious woman in the country last summer actually had insinuated that she used rouge. (Mrs. Hoffman had had quite a row with her at the time.) Their noses and mouths were quite the same, but Eleanor's face was noticeably thinner. They both had hazel eyes. Well, anyway," Eleanor said to herself, "my eyes are larger, and that's something. She has everything else."

The girls, incidentally, didn't look a bit Jewish. Neither, for that matter, did Mr. and Mrs. Hoffman. They all had fair hair and skin and light eyes. Mrs. Hoffman often spoke about it.

"You really don't look a bit Jewish," some new acquaintance would say. And Mrs. Hoffman would beam.

"No," she would say, "it's peculiar, isn't it? Lots of people who meet me think I'm a Gentile, and that I only married a Jew. That's funny, really, because Mr. Hoffman never sets foot inside a temple unless I drag him. Although he doesn't look Jewish, either, and the girls don't, not a bit. We could get into the swellest hotels without being suspected. Not that I'd ever go anywhere I wasn't wanted. I don't care for Gentiles, as a matter of fact. My own kind are good enough for me. But it is true, we certainly don't look like a Jewish family."

That was something else Eleanor wondered about. If

you were so proud of being Jewish, as her mother said she was, why should you be so happy at being told you didn't look Jewish? There was something wrong somewhere. It was different with her. She wasn't particularly proud of being Jewish. It was just something that was, something over which she had no control. If she'd been born a Presbyterian or a Mohammedan she wouldn't have felt any different. It was all quite accidental, how could you feel particularly proud of it? Were all these people, she wondered, really so proud, or was it a bit of bravado? She remembered once when she was a very little girl, how she and Muriel had walked home from Sunday School, holding their Hebrew lesson books aloft, open to the letters that never succeeded in looking like anything but sevens and double u's to Eleanor.

"I ain't ashamed of being Jewish," she had called out to a group of children in front of a Methodist church, thrusting her Hebrew book in their astonished faces. "See! We're just as good as you are, any day." Why? As she lay there in the darkness the scene came back with amazing clarity, although it had happened seven or eight years before. Why had she done that? Those little Methodists hadn't said a word to call forth her action. It had been instinctive. It was the same thing that had made her mother boast of her pride of race. What was it all about? There must be something more to it. She made up her mind to write Ted Levine. He was the only person she knew to whom she could talk about these things. Even Irving Houseman, who liked to discuss the Higher Things of Life, and who was awfully intellectual, shied away from any such subject. Irving was a pillar of the Young Folks' League of the temple. It wasn't seemly for him to even get involved in conversations about Jews.

Too unsatisfactory and dangerous. And what was the use?

But Ted was different. He would talk about anything, the more dangerous the better. He loved an argument, and he was full of wild ideas. It was Ted who had really done a great deal to spoil her confirmation. He had made her doubt. Still, Ted was awfully clever, and it wasn't as though he were alone in his ideas. His whole family felt the same way. They were out and out atheists, the Levines. And socialists, too. They had quite a lot of money, so they couldn't have been socialists out of spite. They really gave a great deal of money to socialist organizations and their big house over in South Orange was a meeting place for all kinds of radicals.

The Levines hadn't been especially popular last summer in the country. In the first place they didn't belong in the hotel. They were Russian Jews. Mrs. Hoffman was furious when she discovered them.

"Isn't there any place in the world where we can be free from those kikes?" she'd asked her husband. "You'd think they'd have sense enough not to come to a nice German Jewish place, where they're not wanted. But they get in everywhere. No wonder some of the swell hotels don't like Jews. They have to be on the safe side."

"Yes," said Mr. Hoffman, "it's awful. They try to get in everywhere. Why, Sidney Hyams had the nerve to propose one for the club last week. We told him he'd better withdraw the name or it would surely be black-balled."

Mrs. Hoffman was terribly distressed when Eleanor began to be seen so much with Ted Levine. The other

women twitted her about it, with just a touch of malice in their voices. Mrs. Hoffman spoke to Elly about it.

"Why," she asked, "do you just have to pick out that Ted Levine to hang around with? When you have half a dozen nice boys of your own kind to choose from, I can't see why it should be necessary to always be with that kike. I never saw such a girl! Anything to be contrary. What do you see in him, anyway? Is he so good looking? Is he so brilliant? He's always shooting off his mouth, and what does he say? A lot of *stuss*, that's what it sounds like to me. A socialist, too. He'll put fine ideas in your head."

"Well," defended Eleanor, "he has brains. And he has original ideas."

"Original my eye. Eccentric, that's what you mean. Now, I don't want you to be seen so much with him hereafter, do you understand? Just take my word for it, I know what I'm doing. It's for your own good. Look at the face on her, will you? You'd think I was doing something terrible to her. I don't know what's the matter with that girl. You'd positively think her mother was her own worst enemy, the way she acts. It's certainly no pleasure to have children nowadays. When I was young I did what my mother told me, *without asking questions*. Ted Levine! Fui."

To avoid further argument, Elly tried not to be seen conspicuously with Ted, but she still managed to be with him a good deal. She liked to hear him talk. He loved to have her listen. She made an excellent audience for his impassioned outbursts, and she didn't argue much. You couldn't argue much with Ted. He was so convincing. He had a manner that swept everything before it, and when you were with him you believed everything

he said. Ted was seventeen, an extremely nice looking boy who would one day be handsome, when he learned something about grooming. He had fine dark eyes and mussy black hair. His skin was a clear olive and his nose, although definitely Hebraic in shape, was thin and sensitive. He was always excited, always arguing, always hurling defiance at existing orders, and wanting to overthrow things. Eleanor found him disturbing and stimulating. If a thought eluded her he could usually chase and capture it for her. She found herself believing in him, in spite of herself.

She had not seen Ted since her return from the mountains the past September. That was nearly a year ago. Her mother refused to let her invite him to the house. It would lead to no good, she said. "Stick to your own kind, it's best in the end." But Elly and Ted had been carrying on a desultory sort of correspondence during the winter. His letters, infrequent ones, had been full of himself. How he had licked a fellow for calling him a dirty Jew, how he had been suspended from high school for telling a teacher to go to hell, how he had written a piece in the school magazine about socialism.

Once again Elly got out of bed, tiptoeing to the dressing table drawer and taking out his last letter. It was dated some time in March. She still owed him a reply. She stood by the window and read it in the moonlight. Then she put it in its place and went back to bed. Yes, she would write to him in the morning. She couldn't see him, but it would be nice to get some of this wondering out of her system just by writing to Ted. Oh, she was sleepy. . . .

The clock, striking four, found her asleep.

CHAPTER IV

I

ELEANOR and Muriel were to be teachers. That was all settled. At least, they were going to study to be teachers. The chances were they'd both be married long before they really got to teaching, but Mrs. Hoffman believed in being prepared. Of course, they didn't actually have to work. Milton Hoffman was not the kind of man who would shirk his responsibilities. He knew how to take care of his wife and children. But everything was so expensive nowadays. . . . And girls wanted the best of everything.

"If they want the little luxuries of life," Mrs. Hoffman was wont to say, talking the matter over with her friends, "they'll have to learn to supply them themselves. Of course, we'll never take a cent from them. What they earn will belong to them, to do as they please with. But I really don't believe in letting girls grow up idle. You never can tell what will happen later on, and it's best to be prepared for a rainy day. I hope they'll never be in a position to really need it, and they won't, as long as Milton lives and has his health. Just the same, I want to feel that my girls will be able to take care of themselves if they ever have to. We won't live forever."

"Sure, you're perfectly right," would come in agreement. "The finest families do it nowadays. It isn't like it used to be, when a man was disgraced if his daughters went out of the house to earn money. And, anyway, teach-

ing is all right. It's so refined, and the hours are easy. And look at the grand vacations they get. Two months, —more, really, every summer, and a week at Christmas and Easter. Off at three o'clock every day, and sure of their salary every week. Your girls are so bright, too. How long do you think they'll teach, anyway? I know them, they'll be married before you know it. They're very popular with the boys now, aren't they?"

Well, yes, Mrs. Hoffman would agree, reluctantly. They were pretty well liked. Too well liked as a matter of fact. They were always wanting to go out or have company, instead of staying at home and doing their lessons.

"But they seem to get along so well, *umbeshrien*, I really can't complain. They get very good report cards, and I never hear about any trouble from the school, so I guess it's all right. Elly gets especially good marks in drawing. She thinks she'll be a drawing teacher. Her teacher seems to think she has quite a talent." She brought out the latest issue of the *Wadleigh Owl*, which had several of Elly's drawings in it. They were fairly good, but not remarkable. Elly was art editor of the *Owl*.

2

Yes, Eleanor certainly was getting queer. Even Muriel, who loved her very much and who understood her very well, had to admit she was puzzled quite a little by Elly's recent behavior. It was a shame, too. If ever a girl had popularity in the hollow of her hand, Elly was that girl. She was one of the cleverest girls in Wadleigh High School, and could have been president of the G. O. if she kept in right with the girls. But lately she seemed

to be getting in with a rather unpopular crowd. It was hard to say exactly what was the matter with them when someone asked you to put your finger right on the trouble. They weren't wild or radical exactly, but somehow they didn't seem to adhere to the best Wadleigh traditions.

Little things, really. For instance, when Wadleigh won the annual debate with Washington Irving High School, Elly refused to join the cheering in the subway going uptown. She said it wasn't the right attitude. And that from the girl who had only last term won the George H. Whiteman prize for the best essay on school spirit! Just little things like that. It was awfully easy to lose your hold on girls, no matter how popular you had been. Muriel had to engage in rather frequent arguments with her friends, defending Eleanor against their attacks, although in her heart she admitted the justice of what they said. Elly certainly was getting queer.

And Muriel knew what was at the bottom of it, too. There wasn't a shadow of a doubt, it was Ted Levine. He and Elly corresponded regularly now, had been doing so for nearly two years, and he occasionally came to the house to see her. He was nineteen now, and a sophomore at Princeton. Elly at seventeen had another term in Wadleigh. Then she and Muriel would enter Teachers' Training School.

That is, if Elly didn't go completely off her head. She had some wild idea about not wanting to teach. Ted was encouraging her in the idea which gave Muriel one more grievance against him.

3

Ted and Eleanor were discussing the subject one Saturday afternoon, when he was in New York for the week-

end and had come over to see her. They were walking along Riverside Drive, in a scurrying spring wind, talking eagerly.

"I *can't* be a teacher," she said. "It'd choke me. It's not that I don't like children. I do. But there's so much routine to teaching. I hate the idea."

"Of course you hate it," he answered, "you're not cut out for it. You haven't the temperament for teaching. It's fine to be a teacher if you're the right kind of person, but you're not. You're much too much of an individualist. Look at what's happening to you in Wadleigh and with your old Sunday School crowd, just because you can't help growing up a little differently from the way they're growing up! You don't see as much of them as you used to, do you? And I noticed you don't wear Houseman's fraternity pin any more. You fought with him on account of me, didn't you?" Smiling at his calm assumption, Eleanor didn't deny its truth.

"You hate yourself, don't you?" she evaded.

"Well, I'm right, and you know it. You needn't pull any of that coy stuff on me. I know you haven't got a crush on me, Elly. I haven't got one on you, either. If I ever fall for anyone it will probably be some beautiful but dumb creature. But you have got a mind. You have an immortal soul, too, and I want to save it for you. See? I know Houseman got into college when he was sixteen, and I know he's headed straight for Phi Beta. That doesn't mean a damn thing. Any fool can do that by grinding. He gets A in Latin, but he won't read the poems of Oscar Wilde because Wilde led an immoral life. You call that brains! I have a real brain and so have you. For the love of God don't be a teacher. I pity the poor kids if you do. And I pity you, too."

"But," hesitated Elly, "do you really think I could use my drawing in some other way? You know it's the only thing I've got."

"Hell, yes," Ted said. "There are dozens of things. Commercial art. You could do advertising drawing. Posters. Costume designs. My sister knows a girl who makes a hundred dollars a week designing evening dresses for a Fifth Avenue shop. And she's her own boss too."

"Your stuff's not half bad. I don't know why you couldn't get away with it if you had some training. I've seen some pretty bad stuff in the magazines. Why'n't you go to art school instead of Teachers' Training? You'd be much better off."

"I'd love to," Elly sighed, "but I could never persuade father. He's got it all arranged for us both to be teachers, and he never changes his mind. And it would mean separating from Muriel. They'd never stand for that."

"Say, listen," said Ted slowly, "where do you get this stuff of being afraid of your parents? I've seen you stand up to both of them in a way that I wouldn't dare to try with my old man, and he's pretty darn liberal. I know how you work. All you need is to get a fixed idea in your head, and you're all set. You're patient and kind of stubborn. Or at least older people call it stubborn. When they are that way they call it determination."

"Do you really think I could get away with it?" Elly asked. "You know I'm not particularly talented. I'm pretty fair, and I might improve if I went to art school, but I'll never be a genius. That's why teaching draw-

ing used to seem all right. Just something to do until . . .” she hesitated.

“Until you get married,” Ted supplied the words. “Well, how do you know you’re going to get married so young? Or at all, for that matter? You know you’ll never marry Houseman now. Even if you still felt like it you couldn’t. You’re getting too different from him. He wants a nice Jewish girl, cut out of a pattern. You’d never do. You’ll probably wind up by marrying me, and I don’t think I’d care to be married to a teacher. Don’t interrupt,” as Elly gasped and tried to speak. “Think it over. I don’t mean marrying me. We’ll come back to that some other time. I mean think over this art school stuff. If you make up your mind to do it I’ll bet on you. You’ll get there.”

After Ted left Elly was very quiet. Inside she was glowing with a kind of hot excitement. He always had that effect on her. He stirred her up. Not emotionally, just her mind. She wasn’t getting a crush on him, she was certain of that. But he seemed to be able to read her subconscious thoughts, and set free all sorts of little ideas that had been lurking in the back of her head for ages. He was the only person who really understood her.

Funny. She couldn’t help laughing at that. Two years ago she had said the very same thing about Irving Houseman. The only person who really understood her. But now she knew differently. The minute she began growing the least little bit away from the ideas of the Sunday School crowd, Irving had shown his disapproval. He was much more devoted to Muriel now; formerly he had thought Muriel commonplace and Elly interesting. Now Muriel was interesting and Elly eccentric. For her

part, she found Irving rather tiresome. He didn't stimulate her. Ted did. That was it. He always got her excited and pointed the way toward something. Usually it was something she had really wanted all the while, only hadn't realized it.

She went to her room and closed the door. Muriel had been at a matinee and wasn't home yet. Elly looked at herself in the glass. It wasn't bad what she saw there. The hair, which at fifteen had been rather thin and wispy, was growing quite thick now, and its color had subtly changed. No more strawberry blond. It was growing less red, and tones of almost Roman gold were getting into it where the light struck it. It gleamed, too, with health and care. And her pale face, with the yellowy hazel eyes, brown flecked, looked, she decided, interesting, if not strictly pretty. The lashes were long and thick and almost perfectly straight. They were quite unusual, golden and dark lashes intermingled, giving an odd, unexpected effect. And the brows were just dark enough to give her face point. They were slender brows, and they formed a sort of modified circumflex over each eye. It was the kind of face that had to be helped along. Not like Muriel's with its rosy cheeks, pretty girlish mouth and soft chestnut hair. Muriel was frankly pretty and she never had to do anything about it. But Elly realized she must employ art. (Why did Ted always make her conscious of her appearance? she wondered. He never spoke of it, yet every time he left her she did the same thing. It must be that he made her aware of her self and possibilities, and certainly her appearance was one of her possibilities.) She rummaged through the dressing table drawer until she located a little cardboard box that was held closed by a rubber band. Opening

this she took out a lip stick, very bright red. She went to the door of her room, opened it softly and stepped into the hall, straining for any sound. No, her mother was not there. She could go ahead safely.

She shut the door again, gently, and went over to the mirror. She applied the rouge rather heavily, and stood back to observe its effect on her wide, although delicately curved lips. It was quite startling in its transformation. She walked away from the mirror regarding herself from a distance of several feet. Why, she looked positively stunning! If only she could always use a lot of lipstick, how good looking she would be! It gave just the necessary accent to her face, and made her pallor look brilliant, instead of just pale. She ought to use a lipstick all the time. She wondered how mascara would look on her eyelashes. She must buy some and try it. Wouldn't her mother be furious! (When she was young, only actresses and bad women used make-up. A little powder was all right, but none of this lip rouge. It was horrid and indecent. Funny, Elly thought, how everything her mother did was all right for others to do, but anything she didn't happen to do was all wrong and immoral.)

If she became an artist, Elly told herself for the hundredth time, she could do a lot of things that would be impossible as a teacher. She could be much freer. And freedom was a most desirable thing. She wasn't altogether sure just what she meant by freedom, but the word had a lovely sound. It could mean so much. If she did as Ted suggested she'd belong to herself instead of to a system. She couldn't bear being part of a system. No. That had been the trouble with the Sunday School crowd. And the religion, too, for that matter. All part

of a system. Some people didn't fit into systems and she guessed she was one of them. She must go to art school. She must figure out some plan of procedure. There wasn't a lot of time to lose. Her father would certainly oppose the idea and it might take all year to win him over. The art school was pretty expensive, too. But if he complained on that score she'd tell him to use the money she'd inherited from Grandma Hirsch. It was hers, even if he held it in trust, and it could certainly be applied to her education. She grew more and more excited. Her stomach had funny little wiggles in it and her face was feverishly hot, although it remained perfectly pale.

She hadn't taken off the lip rouge when Muriel came in, bursting with eagerness over her afternoon with Irving Houseman. The matinee had been wonderful,—“such a strong play. Mother'd be furious if she knew I'd been to that, but we were both dying to see it. It has a wonderful moral. The acting is marvelous. You ought to go.” They had gone to Schrafft's Fifth Avenue place for tea and had met quite a few people they knew.

“Fay was there with that Goldman fellow, you know, the football player. Wonder how he ever got on a football team with a name like that? Still, they say they don't hate Jews so much at Yale. Fay looked stunning. She had on her new coat, it's royal blue, with a kolinsky collar and cuffs and a wide band around the bottom. It cost a hundred and fifty dollars, she signaled it to me across the table. You ever notice how the Wallbergs always tell you what things cost? You'd think they wouldn't. The family's had money for such a long time they ought to be used to it by this time.” She noticed all at once that Eleanor wasn't listening.

"Saaay," drawled Muriel, hand on her plump hips, "where are you, anyway? You didn't hear a word I said." Then, as she came closer, she saw the carmined lips, the unnaturally shining eyes, the restrained eagerness of her sister's manner. "What's up, anyway? Let me in on it, won't you?"

"What?" asked Elly absently. "What did you say?"

"I said," repeated Muriel, "what's it all about? Ted Levine's been here and you're all queer again. What is it this time?" Eleanor told her.

"Listen," she said rapidly, "I'm not going to training school. I don't want to be a teacher. I'll make a rotten teacher. I've told you all that before, but I've never told it to mother and father. I'm going to this evening at dinner, and I want you to help me."

"How in the devil can I help you? It's your own funeral. I think you're crazy myself. You always get foolish after you've been with that idiot."

"He's not an idiot," snapped Elly, "and I don't get foolish after I've been with him. I got sense enough to see where I'm going and why, and why I shouldn't go some other way just because somebody said I should, without thinking about it at all. Nice girls are teachers, so I must be a teacher. Nice girls don't do anything else to earn their livings, so I mustn't. Well, it's silly, and I don't believe in it. And you *can* help me if you want to, by keeping quiet when I talk to the folks. You could back me up, but I suppose that would be asking too much. Anyway, you don't have to throw any extra monkey wrenches into the machinery."

Muriel smiled. "Gee," she said, "you don't have to get so het up about it. You'd think I cared. If you don't feel like being a teacher don't be one. Though I

can't see why you should go to so much trouble for such a little thing. How long will you be a teacher, anyway? You'll probably get married before you even get your permanent license. But if you want to start something, go ahead, I won't queer it. But I'll bet you don't get away with it. Father's pretty determined for you to be a teacher, and you know mother. She hates the idea of art school or anything like that. And she's got a pretty strong will."

"She thinks she has," said Eleanor, "but she takes most of it out in talking. I'll win in the end. You just wait and see!"

"All right," replied Muriel good-humoredly, "only before you go in to dinner you'd better wipe some of that goo off your face, or you'll be so busy fighting on that account you won't have a chance to speak about anything else." Eleanor took heed, and with a piece of gauze she rubbed the rouge off her lips, surveying herself in the mirror.

"It makes an awful difference, doesn't it?" she asked. Muriel agreed.

"Yop. You look much better with it on. Kind of distinguished. Why don't you use it all the time? Ma'd never know the difference if you put it on after you got outside."

"There's no fun in that. I want to use it and have her know I use it. Can't you see?" Muriel shrugged and made no answer.

Eleanor waited until they had finished the soup and were on the roast beef before she spoke. The sound of soup being eaten was more than ordinarily disturbing tonight.

She hesitated before speaking, not knowing exactly how

to begin. Should she try to approach it tactfully, and lead up to the real point gradually, or should she just plunge right in? Well, tact wasn't one of her strong points. She'd better just plunge. She started to speak, but her throat was suddenly husky. Darn! That was the trouble with her. If she could only stay perfectly calm, like girls in stories. But as soon as she tried to speak of anything that was close to her, she got excited, and began to cry, and that spoiled everything. Once you start to cry it's so easy for someone to overrule you. She must try hard to stay calm. She cleared her throat and found words.

"Father." Mr. Hoffman looked up from his plate, where his attention had been centered.

"Yes, my dear." He was in a good humor. He'd won thirty-seven dollars in the afternoon playing poker at the club, and the soup had been his favorite kind.

"Father, I want to ask you something. You know I've tried to speak to you about it before, but somehow I never got a chance. It's been on my mind for a long time."

"Well, what is it?" her mother cut in impatiently. "She's so aggravating. Always hems and haws about a thing. Why don't you come right to the point? What do you want?"

"I want not to be a teacher," Eleanor said, a note of defiance in her voice. "I'm not cut out to be a teacher. I don't want to go to training school. I want to go to art school. Please don't make me go to training school." Her father looked at her gravely as she spoke.

"How long have you had this idea?" he asked quietly. Mr. Hoffman never got excited under any circumstances. He couldn't afford to, he always said. Someone in the family had to keep cool.

"For a long time," Elly answered eagerly. "Oh, it's only recently that it got very clear in my mind, only since it began to be near the time to enter training school. I know it's still more than a year off, but you have to get ready for these things, and it would make everything much simpler if you'd just say I didn't have to go. I'd make a rotten teacher, really. I haven't the temperament for it." Her father smiled at the word. Her mother fiddled angrily with her fork.

"Temperament," she exclaimed. "The idea! What do you know about temperament? You've been listening to that little kike, Ted Levine. Every time he comes to this house the same thing happens. He fills her head full of nonsense and we have to suffer for it. I won't have it, I tell you. He can't come here any more. I'm sick and tired of it!"

"Is that it?" asked Mr. Hoffman, still good humoredly. "Has that boy been putting ideas into your head?" Eleanor felt the tears welling up. How disgusting of her! She simply *mustn't* give way. The whole thing depended on her ability to be calm.

"I don't see why you insist that he puts ideas into my head," she said. "Don't you think I have any ideas of my own? Just because we happen to agree on something doesn't make him responsible for every thought I have. That's not the point, anyway. The point is that I don't want to go to training school. I want to go to art school."

"Art school!" exclaimed her mother. "My God, what an idea! What for? Aren't you crazy enough now, without going to art school yet, to make you crazier?"

"Come now, Laura," soothed her husband, "don't get excited. Let's hear her out. After all, she isn't exactly a child any more. At least she's entitled to let us hear

what she has to say." Elly shot her father a grateful look. He was a reasonable human being, at any rate.

"Go ahead, youngster," he said indulgently, "out with it. What's the nonsense you've got in your head?"

"Well," said Eleanor, "I've already told you. I'm not fitted for teaching. You always say you want me to have some occupation so that I can take care of myself if necessary. Or in case I don't get married, or even if I do get married, to have something to fall back on afterward if anything should happen. That's what you always say, isn't it? Well, you're perfectly right. I should have some occupation. Only it should be an occupation that I'm fitted for. And the nearer I get to teaching the more I realize that it's not the right thing for me. It's too confining."

"Too confining?" hurled Mrs. Hoffman. "I'd like to know any occupation that's less confining. Look at all the vacations! And off at three o'clock every day. What more could you ask?"

"Please, mother," Eleanor begged, her voice sharp with her effort to withhold her tears, "will you *please* let me finish what I'm trying to say without interrupting? It won't take long. You know I can draw fairly well. With training I could draw much better. I'm no genius, but I'm sure I could make a fairly successful commercial artist. The field is a new one and there are big chances in it for girls. There is quite a lot of money, too—much more than in teaching. And I'd be doing something I liked.

"Listen, father," she went on eagerly, "if you don't want to spend the money, or can't afford it, you could use my share of grandma's money. I'd much rather have you spend it on art school than save it for a dowry I'll probably

never need. I don't think I'll ever marry, and even if I do, it won't be the kind of man who'd want money. Will you let me try it, please?" Mr. Hoffman looked grave. He cleared his throat.

"I don't know," he said. "Your idea may have some sense to it. But how can I be sure that you know your own mind? This is very sudden, you know."

"It's not sudden. I've thought of it for a long time, even though I've never spoken of it before."

"Well, if you think you want to be an artist you should be willing to wait, to see whether you really want to. I'll tell you what I'll do. You go through training school, and then if you're still of the same mind we'll see about it. Perhaps I might let you go to art school then." Eleanor groaned. Reasonable. What a fool she had been to think so. It had just been his way of handling the situation. Pretending to be interested, just to calm her and her mother. Treating her like a baby. And the exasperating part of it was that he thought he was getting away with it. That's what she hated. It was bad enough for him to act that way without having him believe she was such a saphead as to fall for it.

"No," she said, her young voice suddenly hard with adult anger. "That's not what I want. It's silly to talk to me that way. Why should I waste three perfectly good years? I know my own mind now, have known it for a long time. Those three years could be spent studying what I want to study, and by the time I'm twenty I can start out earning my own living in something that I like. I can't see why you should be so set on this teaching. It isn't even a sure profession as it used to be. Why, Thelma Livingston hasn't got an appointment yet, and she's been out of training school for more than a year.

She just gets odd jobs substituting here and there, about once a week. What's the sense of that? I *won't* be a teacher, I tell you." Her voice broke with the intensity of her feeling. She was surprised herself to find how much it meant to her. It wasn't being an artist that mattered. She had no tremendous urge toward creating anything, she admitted that to herself. It wasn't that she would die if she couldn't express herself through pen and brush, like people in books. That's wasn't the point at all. She seemed to be fighting for something that was suddenly alive in her, or at least that she had suddenly realized was alive in her, something they were trying to trap and put into a machine and kill. She couldn't tell what it was. It had no name, but it was there. It was almost like fighting for her life. That's what it amounted to, really.

Being a teacher was the symbol of the trap they were trying to force her into. Just like Ernest Pontifex, who let his people force him into the ministry. How much that book stood for to her! Look how hard it had been for Ernest to get out of the trap, once he was in it. She must win this battle, because if she didn't all the future ones would be so much harder. And there would be future ones, she could see that now. Many, many.

The amazement on her mother's face was strange to see, almost funny.

"What do you mean by speaking that way to your father," she demanded. "Have you no respect? The idea! I'm against this art school business, and you'll never do it with my consent. It's not nice. What kind of people would you come in contact with? A lot of Bohemians from that Greenwich Village. No. You're eccentric enough already.

"I can't imagine what makes her like that," Mrs. Hoffman's voice rose, and she assumed an attitude as though she were addressing an audience, speaking, not to anybody in the room, but to imaginary hearers. "I don't know why it is that she can't be like all the other nice respectable Jewish girls. Like her sister, f'rinstance. Like her own kind. But no! Anything to be different. Anything to be contrary. She's been that way since she was a child. She started the day she was born. She wouldn't even drink her own mother's milk. Had to have a wet-nurse!" Mrs. Hoffman bristled with indignation at the recalcitrant infant. Mr. Hoffman smiled. Muriel, who had maintained complete silence, giggled. Eleanor burst into hysterical laughter, quickly smothered.

"That's right, laugh at me!" The smile was erased, as though a sponge had been drawn over her husband's face. The giggle was checked. Gravity prevailed once more. The family wasn't anxious to hear another tirade. They weren't things anyone would draw wittingly upon his head. Still, the little burst of merriment had helped to rob the atmosphere of much of its intensity. Eleanor smiled across at her father.

"How about it?" she asked. "Will you give me a chance?" She knew if he consented her mother could be won over, even though it might be unwillingly. Mrs. Hoffman always gave in grudgingly to any project that was not originally her own. And she used it against you forever after. But the point was that she could be persuaded by her husband to do almost anything. She fussed and fumed a great deal, but usually in the end she gave in to him. His indulgent manner had been fooling her these twenty-one years.

"Well, perhaps," said Mr. Hoffman, who was anxious

to bring the subject to a close. He didn't care at all for these family debates. They were annoying. He was an ardent subscriber to the theory of peace at any price.

"You go ahead with your work now," he said, "and when you graduate from high school we'll see. I wouldn't let you begin until then, at any rate. And in the meantime you might inquire into the rates of the various schools. A lot will depend on how much it's going to cost." Eleanor glowed, but she thanked him reservedly. She wasn't going to be fooled again, not the same evening.

Dinner was over by this time. The girls left the table. They were going to Fay Wallberg's house for the evening and it was nearly time for the boys to call for them.

"You look like the devil," said Muriel, "come inside and fix up a little." She put her arm around Eleanor. "It looks pretty good for the first attack," she said. "Do you think you'll get away with it?"

"I don't know," Elly replied. "Wait a minute." She tiptoed back down the hall toward the dining room, and stood behind the half-closed door. Her parents were still sitting at the table. It was mean to listen that way, she told herself, but she just had to know what he meant to do about it.

"—really intend to let her carry out that ridiculous idea?" her mother was saying. Her father replied in his measured voice.

"Well, I don't know. No harm in giving her a little head right now, is there? I'll let her think I'm giving in, if that'll make her happy. Then, next year we can see. If it's only a whim she'll have forgotten all about it by that time, and if she really means it, perhaps we should let her do it. I can't see much to it myself, and I don't

believe she has any talent to speak of, but I never want it said that Milton Hoffman stood in the way of his own child's future." Eleanor smiled to herself. Good old dad. She'd win him over yet. But just to make assurance doubly sure, she'd fix things so she couldn't get into training school.

"I'll cut gym all next year," she said to herself. "And I won't make up that algebra I flunked in. If I can't get into training school he'll have to let me do the other thing." It was a dirty trick she was contemplating. That was true, all right, she admitted to herself. But all's fair in love and war. And this was war, certainly.

CHAPTER V

I

ELEANOR stuck to her resolve. Graduation from Wadleigh taking place with due solemnity the following June, found her lacking a regent's count in algebra, as well as a full term of gym credits. These, however, did not interfere with her diploma; that was received to the satisfaction of Mrs. Hoffman, along with some two hundred others, including Muriel's. Eleanor had wanted very much not to attend graduation. The whole idea bored her, she told Muriel, and she wished that she could develop a last minute attack of bronchitis. But it would have to be pretty realistic bronchitis to convince her mother, and that would have taken almost as much effort as going to the graduation. So she went.

The subject of art school had been mentioned at various times during the year after the first violent battle. Between Elly and her father a state of armed truce existed; between her and her mother, guerilla warfare. No amount of argument, however, served to bear down the girl's determination. By June, in fact, it had long since stopped being merely a question of training school versus art school. That issue was lost in the bigger one of Eleanor's suddenly developed (to her) selfness. She was Eleanor Hoffman, a human being, a separate entity, and not merely Eleanor Hoffman, the child and possession of Mr. Hoffman and Mrs. Hoffman. She had something inside of her, something she could not as yet define, that demanded to be kept alive at all costs. And although she hated fight-

ing, it was almost easy to fight for that thing. One of the demands of that thing in its effort to keep alive was that she should do nothing without knowing why. She was past the stage in her existence where she must blindly do what someone else told her without having a reason for it. A reason more relevant than "I am your mother, or your father, and I say you should do so." No, there was something wrong about that. Mrs. Hoffman and a great many other people, too, said that was merely a question of respect to your parents. But it seemed to Elly more like a lack of respect for yourself. Respect wasn't something you accorded to people automatically, just because they happened to be placed in some arbitrarily fixed relationship toward you. No, not Elly. You respected them if they earned it and to earn it they had to treat you like a human being, not like a piece of furniture; to earn it they had to *know* they must earn it, and sit back and consider it their due. All this, however, she kept quietly locked within herself, except on those rare occasions when she saw Ted Levine. There was no use talking to Muriel about any of it; Muriel was so impatient with it all. Her plan was to say nothing, never answer back, appear to give in and then go ahead and do as she pleased. She thought Eleanor was a fool to buck things, and said so. Therefore the subject rarely came up between them.

When the time for enrollment came it was comparatively easy. Eleanor, by acting all summer as though art school were a fact definitely accepted, and incontestable, had succeeded by autumn in making her parents believe that they had been in accord with the plan all the time. Although Mrs. Hoffman still blustered a bit, and talked angrily of "the riffraff" Eleanor would come in contact with at the school, she had reached the point where she

was boasting just the least little bit to her friends about the matter.

"Oh, no," she would say in response to a question, "Eleanor's not going to training school, only Muriel. Eleanor was so clever with her drawing in Wadleigh that Miss Jennings—that's the head of the art department, you know—thought it would be a crime not to let her go ahead. Yes, she's a very talented girl. Muriel's much easier to handle, but Elly is the clever one—always has been since childhood. Why, when she was only four years old, she used to draw horses and cows that were positively remarkable." She never said these things in Eleanor's presence, of course. Mrs. Hoffman didn't believe in spoiling her children, and goodness knows, Eleanor was conceited and headstrong enough, without encouraging her.

Mr. Hoffman, reasonably convinced that Eleanor meant to apply herself to the work in art school, had decided to follow the line of least resistance. The result altogether was that in September, a few days after Muriel entered upon her first term in the training school at One Hundred and Nineteenth Street and Seventh Avenue, Eleanor entered the American Academy of Applied Arts on Madison Avenue in the forties. The course under which Eleanor enrolled, which included at various times costume design, interior decoration and poster work, as well as the fundamentals of line and color, covered a period of three years. But Eleanor had already decided that by the end of the second year she ought to know enough to do a little work on the outside.

2

The classes at the academy were small, averaging about twenty. As a rule they were almost equally divided into

boys and girls. Each subject had its own instructor,—they were mostly men, even in the costume design classes—but the head master of the school made daily rounds of inspection and direction. He was a curious man, this head master, whose name, John Lyman Carver, would have established his geographical identity at once, if his appearance and manner had not, which it did. John Lyman Carver, at the time of Eleanor's enrollment in his school, a man approaching sixty, was a member of one of Massachusetts' oldest and most distinguished families. Being a direct descendant of the first governor of that most august state, he had the fine scorn and deep unconcern of family tradition that can be maintained only by those persons whose family tradition is unimpeachable.

Destined by his family for a lawyer,—the profession of the Carver males for generations—John Lyman had scandalized his parents and all but killed his grandmother by deciding, upon his graduation from Harvard, that he would not continue in the law school, after the manner of his forebears, but would become an instructor in an obscure department in his Alma Mater's school of fine arts, a department that his family understood vaguely as having something to do with the interior of European cathedrals. As the instructorship was vacant at the time and as John Lyman's great aunt Mathilda had, unfortunately for the family if happily for John Lyman, left him a sizeable income, there was no way of stopping him.

Becoming a teacher instead of a lawyer had been John Lyman Carver's first tangible break with the family traditions. Others followed in rapid succession. After several years of lecturing about the interiors of European cathedrals and similar subjects, during which he wrote a number of instructive and entertaining books dealing fur-

ther with the matter, he left Harvard, Boston, his family and the Episcopalian Church behind him and went to New York, where for several more years he did nothing but live on his income, contribute occasional articles to art magazines, lecture now and then at a fashionable woman's club and give parties. The women's clubs loved him because he insulted them. He lampooned their manner of dressing, he burlesqued their ideas on home decoration, he satirized their mode of life. As a result his vogue grew until one day he was asked to form an art class, to meet at the homes of a group of New York's foremost Socially Registered.

The art class grew into a number of art classes, and John Lyman Carver's income from his Aunt Mathilda was appreciably increased each season by his income from the yearning dowagers and débutantes who flocked to hear him abuse them. After some seasons of this success he opened his school, the Academy of Applied Arts. While John Lyman Carver's social sallies abated not a whit, his academy upheld the strictest scholastic standards. There was no fooling there. You had to show good cause to get into the school and equally good cause to stay in. To be a Carver graduate meant as much as to be a graduate of the Art Students' League, and in addition there was very little atmosphere of the conventionally unconventional about it.

John Lyman Carver was then, in the fall of 1916, when Eleanor entered his school, an aging but not elderly martinet, with a fringe of white hair surrounding an island of baldness, and a blue suited figure, plump with the plumpness of one of his well-corseted dowagers. A voice, low yet penetrating, that could mock you and usually did, but that could be very kind if it cared to be, was matched by

the light blue eyes, eyes that had at once the hardness and the fire of ice. He looked like anything in the world but an instructor in art, above all the popular conception of the instructor in art.

And he behaved little enough like one. Yet he was considered at that time the foremost authority in the United States on woman's dress and one of the chief authorities on interior decoration. His books on the subjects were in every public library in America, and his opinion on every vagary of fashion was eagerly sought by women's-page editors and symposium collecting reporters. He was always willing to talk and he always said something quotable, something that would provoke discussion.

John Lyman Carver was the sort of man about whom people invariably said, with an air of making a tremendous discovery, that "You either adored him or you hated him." There was no middle ground. It was impossible to say, "Oh, I don't care for him much, but he's all right." If you didn't fall under the spell of his rather questionable charm you writhed under the lash of his arrogance.

Elly was among the company that adored him. From the first moment that she saw him, and heard his knife-edged voice cutting into the very soul of a red-haired girl for daring to appear at school in a pink sweater, she worshiped him.

There was no question of an infatuation. She did not fancy herself in love with him. Eleanor was fairly clear-headed in matters of that kind, and, besides, John Lyman Carver was not the sort of man one could possibly conceive any kind of real warm personal feeling for. He was too hard and brilliant. But he seemed, in the little daily glimpses she got of him, to embody so many of the

characteristics she most admired, to be the personification of the things she was groping towards.

He thought so straight, it seemed to Elly. No sentimentality. How she hated sentimentality. It was so ugly and cruel, and it mussed things up in such a horrible way. Mr. Carver, it was evident from the things he said, would never permit his vision to be clouded by sentimentality. Of course, he was flashy. But behind the flash there was soundness, Eleanor felt. All that glitters is not dross.

It was not long before the influence of John Lyman Carver made itself felt in the Hoffman household. Mrs. Hoffman coming home from a matinee one Wednesday afternoon was astonished to find that the victrola, which for five years stood at an angle jutting into the living room from its far corner, was suddenly pushed against the wall flatly.

"Well, for heaven's sake," she exclaimed upon seeing it, "what has gotten into Katie? She must have dusted behind this thing at last, and she forgot to push it back where it belongs."

"No, mother," said Eleanor, "Katie didn't do that. I did it myself."

"What for? I'd like to know."

"Well, it isn't right to have things caticorner in a room. It's not restful. Everything should be on a line with the walls. Those rugs now, I was just going to fix them too. They don't look right slanting across the room that way. Put them parallel with the walls and you'll see how much better they look."

Mrs. Hoffman surveyed her daughter in amazement as she walked over to the victrola and readjusted it to its accustomed position.

"Is that so?" she asked, rhetorically. "Since when do

you tell me how my furniture should be arranged? For twenty-one years I've had my rugs like that, and now, because you go to art school, I must change them. I don't like things straight. It's too set. It doesn't look home-like. And don't you start telling me how to arrange my house, young lady. When you have a house of your own you can fix it any way you like, with the furniture all in a row like a prison cell, but while you live in your mother's house you'll stand for her ideas. If you don't like it you can lump it."

"Well, I don't care," replied Eleanor, "it's wrong that way. Mr. Carver says . . ." Her mother cut in.

"Oh, shut up with your Mr. Carver. You'd think he was God the way you talk. Don't come to me with too much of that stuff, or I'll take you away from that darn school. I never wanted you to go there in the first place. If all you can learn there is how to sass your own mother, I guess you needn't go, 'cause you know that well enough already."

The phase soon passed. Not Elly's admiration of Carver. That persisted. She never entirely recovered from that. But it wasn't long before she stopped fussing with her mother about the furniture. Some day, she decided, she'd have a place of her own, and there she'd do whatever she wanted. While she stayed at home she'd cut it out. Other things were coming up.

3

School was altogether wonderful. Girls and boys from all over the country came there to study. Such interesting girls and boys, so different from the ones she was accustomed to—her own kind, as her mother always said. Of course, the first few weeks there was a certain amount

of formality, and she didn't get to know them right away. She ate her lunch and spent her free time with Alice Herzog and Virginia Holt, two Wadleigh girls who were in her class.

In about a month, however, she began to know the names of most of the students, and the formality broke up. It started by comparing notes with a girl across the aisle on a costume designing problem they were asked to bring in. After that they got to talking, and in a little while they were quite friendly. The girl's name was Eva Gerrard, and she came from Washington. She appeared to have a great deal of influence among a small group of Washington and Baltimore girls in the class, and Eleanor noticed that she was somewhat older than the others, about twenty-five, she thought. With another girl she shared an apartment on Forty-ninth Street, between Madison and Fifth Avenue, rather near the school, and one day she invited Eleanor to come there for tea.

"I'd love to," Eleanor said. "Wait a minute, I'll phone home and say I'll be a little late. My mother worries so if I'm not home at the usual time." In a minute she was out, and a short walk brought them to Eva's house. It was a regulation remodeled apartment building, which had once been the home of a wealthy old family. Eva and her friend, Roberta Burton, lived on the top floor, in the rear. They had two rooms, with a bath, a kitchenette and a small expanse of roofing euphemistically called a roof garden. It was a pleasant thing when the weather was warm, to sit out there and work, or just not do anything. From the roof the whole south façade of St. Patrick's cathedral was plainly visible, its spires mounting ecstatically up into the city sky. Eleanor stepping out on the roof, couldn't withhold an involuntary exclamation.

"How I envy you!" Eva Gerrard laughed.

"Well, anyway, you're frank about it. I don't blame you, though. I'd envy myself if I were you. It's wonderful to be here this way. Don't you adore New York?"

"I'm crazy about it," Eleanor replied. "I can't tell you how much I love it, but sometimes I wish I hadn't been born here, then I'd have the thrill of seeing it all for the first time. How did you feel when you first saw it?"

"I don't remember," Eva said. "I was only about nine years old the first time I came to New York, and I've been coming at least once a year ever since. Anyway, Washington is too near and too cosmopolitan for anyone who comes from there to get much of a thrill from this. The kind of a thrill you're talking about, I mean. What you want is to get someone from the south or the middle west and bring 'em here. Have you ever been in the middle west?"

"No," Eleanor admitted, smiling ruefully, "Buffalo's the western boundary of my travels. Why?"

"Well, I have. Been as far west as Denver, and spent quite a lot of time around the middle western states—Kansas, Missouri, Wisconsin and those places, and you can't imagine what New York means to people there. Sometimes they pretend to be scornful, but usually they don't bother to pretend, and if you come from New York, the world is yours as far as they're concerned. Why, if you're even someone who goes to New York a lot, like me, they salaam before you all the time, but if you live there, if you were *born* there, they're your absolute slaves. If you want a taste of power, go out to St. Louis or Kansas City for a week or two, and hang around with the gang who want to do some things. The art school crowd,

or the ones with writing ambitions, or something like that. They all stick together more or less, and feed each other's imagination. It's the only way they can keep alive out there."

Eleanor was silent. She sat on a stool on the roof and gazed abstractedly at the spires. Eva busied herself with getting tea. There was a pale gold-colored tea set of Ruskin ware, the cups as thin and delicate as a breath. She wheeled the tea wagon out across the French door that led onto the roof. She smiled down at Eleanor.

"How you can sit and look from you," she said. "You do it all the time. I've watched you in class doing it when you should be listening or working. What are you thinking about all the time?"

"Oh, I don't know. Different things. Just now I was thinking about what a provincial life you can lead in New York."

"That's not a particularly original idea, you know. After they get here and use up all the thrills, the midlanders start to get superior, and tell you what a hick town New York is. But they always stay."

"Oh, I know it's not original, but I mean something different. I don't believe New York is a hick town. And when I said provincial I didn't mean just because a person didn't travel much. I believe you could never leave Manhattan Island and yet not be provincial if you knew how to live with what you had around you—knew how and had the chance. The whole world's in New York. Gee, I know loads of people who have been all over Europe dozens of times and they're the biggest hicks in creation. I know a woman and a girl who've just come back from a trip around the world, and it's affected them no more than a news reel at the movies. Not as much. And there

are people who don't travel at all, and they seem to know everything. Like Miss Blaine, a teacher I had in high school. Right in the middle of that prison, locked up with a whole lot of women whose minds are absolutely in strait jackets, she's free. She's never been abroad, and she hasn't been around this country much, but she seems to have something. I don't exactly know what it is, but it makes her alive. There's nothing routine about her. She teaches but she's not like a teacher, and she doesn't just know teachers. She's free. You're free. I'm not, but I will be some day. Nobody could want anything the way I want freedom and not get it." Eva was pouring tea. She smiled again. She felt so much older than Eleanor, almost like the girl's mother. And she knew precisely what was happening to Elly. She had gone through something of the same thing herself.

"I believe you will get free," she said. "There's really only one thing you have to remember. Most of the time when people say 'if you want a thing enough you'll get it,' they think that all they have to do is to sit around and concentrate hard on wishing, like Aladdin or somebody in a fairy tale. But that's not the idea at all. If you want a thing enough you'll *make* it happen. You'll fight for it and work for it and give up anything else for it and eventually you'll get it. And if you don't get it, that's a sure sign that you didn't want it enough. I know, because something like it happened to me once. Not precisely in the same way—but a parallel situation."

"I guess that's right. Anyway, it sounds like a comfortable alibi if you fail to get what you go after. But I'll get what I want. Believe me, I know it's going to be hard, because everyone around me wants other things for me. I had to fight to get to art school. My parents

wanted me to be a teacher. Mr. Carver's a free person, isn't he? Don't you think he's wonderful?"

"Yes. But you know he never means a word he says."

"I think you're wrong about that," Elly said. "You're fooled by his manner. He talks as though he didn't mean what he says, but I bet he does. That flippant line of his is a sort of protective coloration. Under it he can say anything he likes and most people just naturally conclude that he doesn't mean it."

"It doesn't really matter whether he means the stuff or not, he's so amusing. My father knows him awfully well. They went to Harvard together, and dad says he was exactly the same then as he is now. Just as flippant and just as shocking and just as entertaining. He had to fight for his freedom, I'll bet. You know what kind of atmosphere he comes from. Rigid New England stuff, with horsehair sofas and red plush chairs. His family threw fits, dad says, when he refused to be a lawyer and took an instructorship in the college instead. But he just rode right over them. That's what you've got to do to people who get in your way. Ride right over them. Have some more tea?"

Roberta Burton came in while they were drinking their tea. She was a lovely yellow-haired girl, with a brilliant complexion and huge blue eyes with the traditionally dark lashes of beauty. As a matter of fact, the lashes were quite pale in their native state. Roberta, a wizard with the makeup box, darkened them carefully and perfectly every day with a tiny brush and a suspicion of mascara. Roberta bounded into the room. She was a light, graceful girl who could bound without devastating results.

"Look," she cried, before she was well into the room,

"look, I've had my hair cut. Don't you think it makes me look like Irene Castle?"

Hat in hand she hopped out onto the roof, where Eva and Eleanor gazed at her, speechless with wonder. Cutting off one's hair was no casual matter in those days. It was a hazardous undertaking, and it might result in social suicide. Not that it would with Roberta Burton. Roberta was a girl who transcended every situation in which she was involved. A great deal of money, an extraordinary amount of beauty, a bit of talent and a colossal impudence made her invulnerable. If Roberta bobbed her hair to-day, to-morrow would find seven out of ten girls of her acquaintance at the Ritz barber shop.

"How could you, Roberta?" Eva asked. "Your wonderful hair."

"Oh, don't be silly," Roberta said. "It looks just as wonderful now, doesn't it? 'The Castle Clip.' My only regret is that I didn't think of it before Irene Castle. Isn't that annoying? Oh, well, we don't travel in the same set, so I guess it doesn't matter much. And think of the advantages. No hairpins. No trouble to keep it neat. Just run a comb through it and you're finished for the day. And every time I'm with a man and we see some woman with loads and loads of hair, I can say 'that's the way mine used to be before I cut it.' Oh, hello there, Eleanor, how do you like it?"

"It looks great," Eleanor said. "Seems to fit you exactly. You know, expresses your personality. A sort of outward sign of freedom, so there won't be any mistake about the inside you." Roberta laughed.

"That's it. 'So that all who run may read!' Roberta Burton, a free spirit. Why don't you cut yours off? I'll take you around to the man who did mine. He's awfully

good. And if he thinks you won't look well with short hair he refuses to do the job. He's a real artist. He used to be a barber, he told me, but he felt the call of art, so he went into a hair-dressing place. He really works over his clients the way Sargent works over a painting. He's Spanish, and frightfully intellectual. He knows all about the latest literary movements in Spain, and he's an intimate friend of Benevente. He told me some of the most amusing stuff about the Spanish writers. Guess what his name is? Pomado. Isn't that a perfect name for a hair dresser?

"Oh, and listen. When he was a barber he used to work in the Brevoort and he shaved a lot of celebrities. One of his customers was Dunne Bradford, that fat little art critic on the *Star*, and Pomado says they used to go on drinking parties together, only he had to stop, because Bradford couldn't carry his liquor and disgraced him in the eyes of the bartenders."

"He sounds fascinating," Eva said. "I must go there to get my hair washed. Could you get me an appointment with him, do you think?"

"Well," Roberta thought for a moment, "I suppose so, but don't you think it would be much better if I went and told you about him? If we both go it won't be nearly so entertaining. I hate to be selfish but I really need him in my act."

Eleanor looked at her watch. It was nearly six o'clock.

"I've got to go," she said. "I hate to, but I must. Let me come again some time, will you?"

"Come any time you like," said Eva. "We probably won't ask you again, 'cause we'll take it for granted that when you're ready to come again you'll say so."

"Say," exclaimed Roberta, "I think I'll have a party

some night next week, for some Washington people who'll be here. Probably Tuesday. I'll get some boys from school and a couple of others that are floating around. Want to come down? It'll probably be amusing."

"I'd love to. Let me know what night you decide on, I'm pretty sure I can make it."

4

Out in the street Eleanor felt exhilarated, excited. The way she always felt after being with Ted Levine. Oh, it was wonderful to discover that there were people like that, perfectly normal people, not queer or eccentric, who led regular lives, and yet who had a kind of aliveness to them, who seemed to be doing the things they did because they wanted to, and not because somebody told them to. To belong to themselves and not to a system. That was the whole point of everything. What was the good of being alive if you didn't belong to yourself? She would belong to herself, must belong to herself. Ted Levine had once told her, she recalled, that if she once pinned her mind on a thing, she got it. And now Eva, who obviously was a person who knew about such things, told her that the only way to get what she wanted was to fight for it. Make it happen. She wondered what Eva's struggle had been.

Well, she would make it happen. Nobody owned her, but herself. She'd have that for a fixed idea, and nothing else would matter. She was glowing, and full of a sudden strength. She walked over towards Fifth Avenue, at its most beautiful in the soft dusky haze of the October twilight. She stood at a corner, waiting for a Riverside Drive bus to come along. Several passed but they were all filled and didn't even stop. Eleanor opened her purse and counted her money. Yes, she had enough to take a taxi

home. It was a frightfully extravagant thing to do, and her mother would be furious if she knew, but somehow she couldn't bear the idea of dissipating her glorious mood in the crush and struggle of an elevated train or a subway. She'd have to fight so hard for the mere privilege of standing on her two feet and holding onto a strap that there wouldn't be anything left of her fine, high courage. It would all ooze out at her heels.

She hailed a cab and was soon jerking unevenly along the Avenue reveling in her exaltation, swishing around in it, letting it flow over her completely, like a warm bath. It was just as physical as that, and just as gorgeous, this feeling. But like a warm bath, it would get cold if she stayed in it too long without turning on the water. The feeling had to be kept alive.

It was easy to keep it alive after they got out of the traffic jam on the Avenue, and sped through the park. The curious buzzing sound of the tires on the asphalt driveway seemed to sing it, and the lights reflected in the lake seemed to twinkle it. High, high. Such a wonderful feeling. She hardly knew why. It was impossible to explain. If you had asked her why she felt that way she would have answered only "because I am going to be free."

"Free? What do you mean? Free from what?" It couldn't be explained. "I don't know. Just free. Belonging to myself. Not part of a system."

As the taxi approached her neighborhood, the exaltation began to slip away. She wondered what her mother would say when she came in. It was awfully late for her to be out, especially when Mrs. Hoffman didn't know where she was. She'd only spoken to the maid when she phoned up to say she'd be late. Mrs. Hoffman liked the girls to

be home when she got back from an afternoon of shopping or bridge, and she always made it a point to have all three of them waiting for Mr. Hoffman when he got home from business.

"I never let Milton come home to an empty house. Nothing I'm doing is so important that I can't stop in time to be home before my husband gets there. A man's entitled to that much consideration in his own home. And the girls are always there to greet him when he comes in. He likes that. We're a very united family, you know."

Now it was well after six, and Mr. Hoffman always got in punctually at five thirty. He would be there now, wondering at her absence. And her mother would be there, angry. Muriel would be there, too, waiting to see what would happen. She wished she had never got them used to being home at a specified time every afternoon. That was the mistake. Part of a system. Well, no more of that. Still, it wasn't going to be an easy job, getting out of that system. Even at the moment she was conscious of a sensation strangely like fear. Her mother would probably be looking out of the window, waiting for her to arrive. Perhaps she'd better dismiss the taxi at the corner of Eighty-sixth Street and Broadway, and walk the rest of the way, as though she'd come from the subway.

No, she wouldn't do that. If she was going to assert herself she might as well begin at once and drive up to the door in the cab.

Mrs. Hoffman was standing at the window when Eleanor stepped out of the cab. She rushed to the door and was waiting there when the elevator let her off at the fourth floor.

"What's the matter, has anything happened?" she exclaimed as she opened the door for Elly, who bent rather

automatically to kiss her. "I've been so worried, I phoned to Wallberg's, I thought you might have been there, but Fay said she hadn't heard from you all week."

"No, nothing happened," Eleanor said lightly, "I went to tea with a girl from school and we got talking. I called up and told Katie I'd be late."

"Why, it's nearly half past six. Your father's been home nearly an hour. You know he likes you to be home when he gets here. Now, you know I don't want you to think you can start gallivanting about, just because I consented to let you go to art school. I want you to remember that you're still my daughter, and that I expect the same respect from you now as I always did. Do you understand?"

"Yes."

"All right, then, now go in and let your father know you're here."

Eleanor, going first to her room to remove her wraps, walked slowly down the hall to the library, where Mr. Hoffman was engaged with the evening paper. He didn't hear her come into the room. She tiptoed across to his chair, bent over him and kissed the bald spot on the top of his head.

"Hello, old man," she said gayly, "you don't seem petrified with fear at my non-appearance."

"No," he smiled genially, "I wasn't worried. It seemed a bit strange not to find you here, of course, but I knew you were all right. Your mother, though. . . . You shouldn't do things like this to her. You know how she worries."

"Well," said Eleanor a trifle petulantly, "she ought to get over it, then. I'm no infant, am I? I don't see why I have to come and go on schedule, and I'm not going to

any more, either. It's just a matter of habit." Mr. Hoffman raised his eyebrows a trifle, smiled faintly and rather inwardly, and returned to his paper.

"Oh, by the way," Muriel said at dinner, "Gerry wants us to come to her house next Thursday night. She's having a Hallowe'en party."

"I think that'll be all right," answered Elly. "But I'm not sure. One of the girls from school is having a party some night next week, and she's asked me. I don't think it will be Thursday, only if it is I'll have to go to that."

"Who is this girl?" asked Mrs. Hoffman.

"Her name is Roberta Burton," Eleanor replied. "She comes from Washington. She's awfully nice. I was at her house this afternoon for tea, although I wasn't really visiting her."

"Is her family here in New York?"

"No, she's here with another girl, Eva Gerrard. She's a Washington girl too."

"What do you mean, you were at their house? Are they staying with relatives here?"

"No, they have an apartment together on Forty-ninth Street, near Madison Avenue, near school. They both have lots of money. It's an awfully cute apartment." Mrs. Hoffman's face grew red.

"You mean to say that two young girls live alone in an apartment, without a chaperone? Downtown on Forty-ninth Street?"

"Yop."

"I never heard of such a thing. It's disgraceful. What kind of girls can they be, I'd like to know?"

"Why, they're lovely girls. Terribly clever and self-reliant. They're kind of important socially in Washington."

"A lot you know. Important socially. How can you tell? People can get away with anything when they're in a strange city. If they're so important socially it seems mighty funny to me that their parents allow them to live alone in an apartment that way. It looks mighty queer to me. I don't like the idea of your going there. God knows what might have happened to you in a place like that. Were there any men there?"

"Oh, mother, don't be silly. It's horrid of you to talk that way about people you don't know. Don't you give me credit for any sense? I tell you, they're lovely girls, as nice as any you've ever known. I'm darned pleased that they even notice me."

"Of course, call me silly. Your mother's always silly. Naturally she couldn't learn anything about life in forty-two years, but you know all about it in eighteen. I tell you I don't like to have my daughter mixed up with girls like that."

"Girls like what?"

"Girls who live in apartments alone. It's not right. I tell you. Just mention one single girl of our acquaintance who would dream of doing a thing like that. Can you imagine any nice Jewish people *allowing* their daughter to go gallivanting off alone and live in an apartment with another girl? They'd die first."

"That has nothing to do with it. I suppose there might possibly be a Jewish girl somewhere in the United States who was going to school in a different city from the one where she lived. Then she'd have to live somewhere, wouldn't she?"

"Certainly, but she'd live in a dormitory, or a girls' club, or with a private family, somebody well recommended. Not alone in an apartment with another girl.

Anyway, I don't approve of girls going away to school. Girls belong at home where their mothers can look after them. Anyway, that is all aside from the point. The point is that I don't want you to be going around with a lot of strange people. What do I know about these girls? Even if they aren't doing anything wrong in that apartment, and I'll admit they might not be, I don't care to have you associating with them. They're not your kind. For the life of me I don't understand why you can't be satisfied with your own kind. Why is it that people who are good enough for your mother and father and sister, can't be good enough for you? Answer me that?" Eleanor was silent. She was afraid to speak. There was such a lot to say to that question, but she didn't know exactly how to say it, and, besides, she didn't want to antagonize her mother any further. Mr. Hoffman filled in the pause.

"You can't expect her not to make some new associations, Laura," he said in his most soothing voice. "Now she's in a new atmosphere it's only natural that she'll meet new people. That doesn't mean she isn't interested in her old friends any more, does it, Elly?"

"Of course not." She shot him a grateful glance as she replied, her voice faintly sharp. "But I don't see why I can't make new friends if I want to."

"Well," put in Mrs. Hoffman, "I suppose that new atmosphere is making an impression on you, but you'll find in the end that old friends are the best. Look at Muriel, what a good time she's having, and nothing but her same old crowd from Sunday School and high school. She doesn't go off picking up all sorts of strange people to go around with. I wish to God you were normal, like other girls. You'll have me in my grave with worry yet."

"Come, come," said Mr. Hoffman, "that's enough of this subject for the present. Let's talk about something else now. How about going down to the Strand to-night, all of us? I hear there's a very good picture there this week."

"But, father," said Eleanor, the sharpness in her voice intensified, "I want to . . ." Mr. Hoffman patted her hand with exasperating finality. "Sh, sh," he said. "No more now. We'll settle it some other time." Eleanor stamped her foot. Muriel giggled. Mrs. Hoffman grew red. They all left the table.

"We'd better get ready now if we're going," Mr. Hoffman suggested. "It'll take half an hour to get down town." As they dashed down the hall to their room, Eleanor protested to her sister.

"Doesn't he use unfair methods?" she said. "He's really worse than she is, because you know where you stand with her, and just what to expect. He fools you by pretending to help, when all he cares about is to get everyone shut off."

"Peace at any price," said Muriel.

"That's just it, you have that attitude too. But it's not real peace when you get it that way. You only choke people off and get them quieted down for a while, but all the feeling stays inside them, and it's worse the next time."

"Oh, well, I don't know why you should care. You always get everything you want, anyway."

"Do you really think so?"

"Sure. You got to art school, didn't you? And you'll go to that party next week, too. You just wear 'em out, the way the Allies are trying to wear out Germany. A kind of private war of attrition. Well, I guess it's a good

way if you have the patience. I prefer my way. You get the same results with less commotion." Mr. Hoffman's voice came down the hall, at the door.

"Come along girls, aren't you ready yet? You know I don't like to sit very far back, my eyes aren't as good as they once were."

CHAPTER VI

I

ELEANOR went to the party at Forty-ninth Street. Her going was not accomplished without a considerable amount of wrangling, but she did go. There were several times when she found herself on the verge of giving in; moments when the scorned doctrine of peace at any price seemed highly desirable. No party could be worth all that fuss. Life itself was scarcely worth it. The discussion of the previous evening came up again every time school or anything connected with school was mentioned. Mrs. Hoffman was no more willing on Tuesday than she had been on Friday, that Eleanor should go. She could see no reason why it was necessary for her daughter to go outside her own set for her amusements. They were good enough for Muriel, why weren't they good enough for Eleanor?

The fact still remained that Eleanor went. Not precisely the way she wanted to—her father took her down to Forty-ninth Street and arranged to call for her again, those being the conditions upon which his own consent was contingent—but nine o'clock Tuesday night found her stepping into the dim warmth of the apartment living room. Mr. Hoffman, wishing to be tactful, left her at the downstairs door, waiting below until she was safely inside. He would be back at eleven-thirty, he said.

"Here she is," called a voice from somewhere on the low divan, where several people, she couldn't quite tell how many, were grouped in a rather tangled fashion, while

several more were sprawled on the floor at their feet. "Put your things away in the bedroom and then come out and meet some people." The voice belonged to Roberta Burton. Eva was nowhere in the room.

"Don't mind my not getting up, will you?" Roberta called. "I'm wedged in so tight here I can't move."

"No," Eleanor answered, "it's all right, I'll manage." In the bedroom she found powder and rouge and a lipstick. She applied the latter rather heavily to her mouth and dusted her face lightly with the powder. The rouge she left severely alone. Funny, she should hate the idea of rouged cheeks the way she did, and be so thoroughly in favor of rouged lips.

"But it's not quite the same thing," she thought. "Face rouge is vulgar, and lip rouge just accentuates your features. Like a shadow in a drawing." A last hasty glimpse of herself in the mirror satisfied her that she looked all right, and she went back into the living room. She moved rather shyly. It was an ordeal, this meeting a roomful of strange people, particularly with such an informal hostess. Eleanor's activities had taken her so little outside her own groove that it was still somewhat difficult for her to meet new people. So she moved slowly and with perceptible hesitation. But there was nothing in her slowness or hesitation that revealed her shyness. It looked more like the leisureliness of extreme poise, of a strong and unshakable assurance.

She stood in the doorway, the light from the tiny hall shining down on her red gold hair. Her dress was of velvet, a green so dark that it was almost black, with long tight sleeves, a wide skirt and a close fitting bodice which had an edging of fine lace at its square neck. With the accentuated red of her rouged mouth and the deep pallor

of her face in the half light, she was quite lovely. She had a strongly developed, if not as yet recognized sense of dramatic values, and it was a deeply concealed instinct rather than an accident that framed her there in the doorway for the edification of Roberta's friends.

"You look lovely," said Bobbie, fulfilling her obligation as hostess by sitting up on the divan. "People," pointing to Eleanor, "this is Eleanor Hoffman, who has been my sole topic of conversation up to her arrival. Do you wonder I talked about her? Eleanor," with a vague, all-inclusive wave of the right arm, "this is my gang. I could be English and not tell you their names, but it's always seemed like a dirty trick to me. So I'll begin here at my right. This emaciated looking young man is Tubby Marshall, Princeton '17. I'll give you the salient features about these people; I always do to newcomers, it saves so much embarrassment, like asking a Harvard man if he goes to Yale. Over there in the corner, sitting aloof, is Tubby's roommate, David Horace Buddington Lane, commonly known as Bud. At my feet, reading from left to right are Ruth Barclay and husband, Dickie Barclay of Washington, D. C., and Margery Thayer of Baltimore. There's nothing interesting about them except that they're my friends. This," patting the shoulder of the man on her left, "is Henry Wells of New York and the *Morning Star*, and next to him is Stanley Miller of the same paper. Hank should be working, but he's on a story in this neighborhood, and he dropped in for a while, 'cause I told him I had a beautiful new girl up my sleeve."

"For God's sake, Bobbie," Henry Wells said, "have a heart, can't you. Don't you see that you're fussing the girl? You seem to forget this is her first time in this gang of barbarians."

"*You* seem to forget whom you're talking to," Bobbie replied blithely. "Shut up and let me finish this job. This one here is Billy Tracy, from school. You've seen him around, haven't you?" She went on as Eleanor indicated that she had. "Eva's out to the store with Tom Berry. He's from school, too. You know, that red-headed boy in the life class, the one whose ties Mr. Carver always likes so much?"

Elly knew him too, and said so as she sank to the floor on a pillow provided for her by Bud Lane, the boy in the corner. The others on the floor separated just enough for her to cram into a tiny area at Roberta's feet. It wasn't exactly a formal way to approach a new crowd, but at least it served to dispense with stiffness. Eleanor was a little distressed. She had a feeling that she was expected to say something clever. But apparently she wasn't, or at any rate she didn't have a chance, for Roberta went right on talking.

"Is it time for you to dash around to the Biltmore, Hank?" she asked the lanky reporter from the *Morning Star*. "I have such a sense of responsibility about my friends. I'd hate you to miss the story and get fired, 'cause then you'd be hanging around me all the time."

"No," replied Wells, covering a yawn with a huge hand, "the meeting isn't over until eleven, and I've got Kelly on the *Gazette* watching things for me. He'll call me here if anything important breaks." Eleanor, sitting on the floor between the youthful Mrs. Barclay and Bud Lane, who had forsaken his corner, looked at Henry Wells and Stanley Miller with an interest approaching eagerness. Reporters on a New York paper! She'd been reading about reporters for ages, beginning in her childhood with the ones in Alger books, who always saved the poor young

newsboy from going unjustly to prison, and ferreted out the real criminal. And later there had been such books as *The Clarion* and *The Gentleman from Indiana* and the *Gallagher* stories of Richard Harding Davis himself, typifying to Eleanor the newspaper man, a magical glamorous sort of being, a modern knight errant, always doing brave things and having thrilling adventures. And handsome. Newspaper men were always handsome. Of course there had been movies, too, in which the young reporter, a cub, gets the big scoop, rescues the girl reporter, who is actually the publisher's daughter in disguise, from a gang of crooks, and marries her in the last reel. Not that Eleanor had actually believed these things. It wasn't that, but there was in her mind, nevertheless, a definite picture of what a newspaper man should be, and both these young reporters most rudely disarranged that picture.

There was nothing glamorous about either of them. Henry Wells was an extravagantly tall man, exceedingly pale, with red hair and a few large, pale freckles scattered over his rather vacant countenance. Stanley Miller was very dark, of medium height, with bright darting black eyes and a small dark mustache. He was good looking in a sleek oily sort of way, something like villains in the movies. Where his wrists showed below his coat sleeves Eleanor could see a heavy growth of black hair. An involuntary shudder went through her when she looked at it.

Miller was dressed with rather more care than Wells, but neither was marked by any especial fastidiousness. On the contrary, Eleanor noted that they were slightly grimy as to collar and cuffs. The only truly distinguishing mark of the newspaper man about them, as Eleanor was to learn somewhat later, was the funny kind of hats

they wore—made of tweed, with a band and bow of the same material, and a ludicrously turned-up brim. Later, when Eleanor had occasion to visit newspaper offices and see newspaper men she discovered that nearly all of them wore these funny tweed hats. It seemed to be a badge of the trade.

At the moment, however, she was in ignorance of their hats. She regarded them thoughtfully and admitted herself disappointed. Not in their looks alone, but in their attitude. It seemed wrong—out of her picture, that they should be so indifferent about the story. She wanted to know more about it, so she conquered her reticence and spoke.

“What kind of story is it?” she asked Hank Wells.

“Oh just a dinner in honor of some darn fool judge. It’s really of no importance, only there’s a chance that one of the speakers might cut loose with a few cracks at the governor. We had a tip that he might and in that case the story’s good for a half a column or so. But it’s an awful bore.” Then, turning to Miller, “I’m sick of the assignments I’ve been getting lately. Nothing but these meetings. I’m going to kick to McDonnell. Jesus, any cub could be doing what I’ve been handed for the past month. I wish I had the guts to get out of this business.”

“Oh,” from Eleanor in a shocked voice, “you mean you don’t like it?” Miller answered for him.

“Sure he likes it,” he said, “we all do. You’ve got to like it or you can’t stick it, it’s such a rotten business. No money—why any office boy in a bank gets as much as a reporter—no thanks, no glory, except for about one out of every hundred—no future. So you see, you’ve got to like it or you’d get out. Wells is crazy about it, he’s just

crabbing now because he's had a run of rotten assignments."

"Oh," said Eleanor, forgetting in her interest to be self-conscious, "this is certainly a revelation to me. I've never met a newspaper man before, and I've had all my ideas about them from fiction and the movies." Like a flash, Wells thrust out his long, lean arm, and clasping her hand in a tight grip, began to shake it vigorously, grinning widely as he did so.

"Allow me to thank you," he said with mock formality. "You have restored my faith in human nature. I owe you an everlasting debt." Eleanor laughed. The others looked inquiringly at him.

"Why?" she asked.

"Because, my dear Miss Hoffman, you meet a newspaper man, admittedly for the first time in your life, and you talk with him for ten minutes without once saying 'your work must be so fascinating,' and 'you must meet such interesting people.' Lady, you're the first person I've ever met who didn't say those two things to me. And I thank you." He bent low and kissed her hand. Eleanor's pale face showed a faint trace of color.

"The trouble with these newspaper men," said Dickie Barclay, "is that they're always talking about themselves. They think everybody in the world is interested in their darn shop talk."

"Most people are, unfortunately," said Miller. "We'd like to talk about something else once in a while, but nobody gives us a chance."

"Well, as far as I'm concerned," said Dickie cheerfully, "you can shut up forever. You don't hear me clamoring for it, do you? And I don't talk business all the time, either."

"Why should you, darling," put in his pretty wife. "Everybody knows you're only in your father's bank because you have to be or starve. We can't live on our youth and beauty." Dickie threw a pillow at her. "Aw, shut up," he said.

"Here comes Eva," said Roberta, detecting footsteps on the stairs. "I didn't realize how long she'd been out." Eva and Tom Berry came in breathlessly, laden with packages from the delicatessen store, and laughing in little gasping bursts.

"It's simply unbelievable," squealed Eva. "Someone must have done it for a joke. Oh, hello Eleanor, you got here all right." She deposited her bundles in the kitchenette, and came back into the room, holding aloft a little red book, distinguishable in no way from hundreds of other little red books.

"Look," she said, "we found this in that little second-hand book shop around the corner. It's simply wonderful. *An Actress' Crime*, or *All for Name and Gold*. That's what kept us so long. We started to read it over there, but it seemed a pity to deprive you of it, and so we bought it for a dime. I felt like a thief for taking it at that price. It's worth millions. Listen," and she turned to the table of contents. "Listen to some of the chapter titles:

"Chapter one, 'a child of the wreck.' Chapter two, 'she is beautiful enough to be any man's plaything.' Chapter five, 'henceforth our paths in life lie in different directions.' Chapter nine, 'as a married man you have no right to make love to me'—that's a good one, isn't it? Chapter twenty, 'I will yet bring him to my feet—I swear it!' Oh, it's too wonderful. It can't be real, someone must have been spoofing."

"Don't be a nut, Eva," Tubby Marshall said, "I bet that was one of the most popular novels of the nineties. Let me see it." She tossed the book to him. "Sure," he said, looking through it, "it's copyrighted in 1900, the author certainly was prolific. She wrote millions of other books. They must have been grand. *Temptations of a Great City, Lured from Home, Because of her Love for Him*, etc., etc. I'll bet the etceteras were wonderful."

"Let's hear some of the story," said Billy Tracy. "That ought to be good if the title and the chapter heads mean anything."

"For the love of Mike, don't read it aloud. I hate to be read to. It's a sign of mental weakness if you enjoy it." This from Bud Lane. Eleanor shot an appreciative look at him.

"I hate it, too, as a rule," she said. "This is a kind of fun, but ordinarily it's an awful nuisance. Like playing bridge. Do you think bridge is stupid, too?"

"Yop. That is, for me it's stupid. I guess it's all right for them as likes it. What I mean is, I don't want to pass a law against it, or anything. Only it seems rather dumb to me."

"How do you happen to be down to New York in the middle of the week?" Elly asked.

"Oh, we cut a couple of afternoon classes and came down. We'll drive back late to-night. Tubby's got his car. We don't do it often, but we just felt sort of low and wanted amusement, and we knew we'd get it if we came here. Great girl, Bobbie. Eva's good, too. You never do anything at their fool parties, but you always have a good time. Why haven't I met you here before?"

"I've only known the girls a month. We're in a couple of the same classes at art school. They were there last

year, but it's my first term. They've been terribly nice to me."

"They ought to be," said Bud. "Do you ever come up to Princeton?"

"I've been there for football games occasionally," Eleanor said. "Do you know Ted Levine? He's a junior. An awfully good friend of mine. I sometimes go to games with him." Yes, Bud knew him. Slightly. They didn't trail with the same crowd.

"He's a clever sort of guy, but a bit eccentric. He has quite a following among the highbrows. I guess I'm a little too boneheaded for him." Eleanor laughed. She didn't know exactly what to say. She supposed the thing to do was to assure him that he wasn't a bit boneheaded, but somehow that seemed silly. So she said nothing at all.

"I may not get a chance to ask you this later," Bud said, bending near her, "so I'm going to now. May I call you up next time I'm in town? Will you have lunch with me, or tea or something?"

"I'd like to," said Eleanor. "I think it would be lots of fun."

"Put your phone number down here, will you?" And he handed her a tiny black leather book, opened to the H page. Elly smiled. "Aren't you clever," she said, writing her number in the book, "you've remembered my last name all evening."

"May I take you home?" he asked.

"Oh!" Eleanor remembered with a start. "My father's coming for me at eleven-thirty. What time is it now?"

"Quarter past ten. What do you mean, your father's coming for you?" Eleanor smiled.

"My mother thinks that everyone she doesn't know is villainous, and that all taxi drivers are white slavers in disguise. And the only condition on which I was permitted to come down here at all, was that my father should deliver me and call back for me. Silly, isn't it?"

"Perfectly idiotic," agreed Bud. "Go in there and call up your father and tell him that he needn't come down for you. Tell him that we're all going in the same direction, and we'll drop you at your house. I bet he'll be glad. If he's home now he'll hate to come all the way down here again. C'mon, try it. I'll go with you."

"I don't think it'll be much use," Elly said, "but I do hate to think of the poor dear coming all the way down again when it's so unnecessary. All right, I'll call him." Bud scowled.

"Is that your only reason for doing it? Don't you want to go home with me?"

"Of course, that will be very nice." Together they went into the bedroom to telephone. Mr. Hoffman himself answered the phone.

"Dad," said Eleanor, "I just called to tell you that you needn't come down to call for me. A whole lot of the people here are going uptown, and they've been nice enough to say they'll take me home."

"Good work," cheered Bud at her elbow.

"No, several of them," she repeated in response to a question from her father. "It'll be quite all right, really. It's so silly for you to come all the way down here for nothing. Please! I assure you I'll be taken care of. . . . No, I won't come home too late. . . ." She nodded encouraging to Bud. . . . "Is mother in bed? . . . I thought so. . . . All right then, now don't worry, please."

"There," she said, hanging up the receiver, "that was easier than I thought it would be."

"I knew it would be a pipe," Bud said. "You don't suppose he was looking forward to the idea of coming down here again, do you?"

"But, really," she said, "I've got to get home reasonably early, because if I don't there'll be an awful row in the morning and I'll never get out again."

"All right, I'll take you any time you say. We don't have to wait for the others. I just wanted a chance to be with you a little more. This darn place is so small a fellow can't have any privacy. Gee, I could say an awful lot to you if I got a chance. You're the most interesting girl I've ever met. Really. And I've met a lot of 'em." Eleanor laughed.

"How do you know I'm interesting? I've hardly said a word all evening."

"That's just it, I've been watching your face. Especially your eyes. Gosh you have wonderful eyes. So mysterious. I'd like to know what's going on behind them. What do you think about all the time? When you think nobody's watching you you get the strangest expression on your face." Eleanor smiled. She didn't know what to say, so she smiled.

"There." Bud pointed at her face. "There it is now. Now I dare you to tell me what you were thinking just then. That mysterious smile of yours. Just like the Mona Lisa. Has anyone ever told you that before?"

Yes, a few people had, Elly admitted. She wondered whether any man ever thought of anything else to say to any woman. And she wondered, too, what Bud would say if she told him what she was really thinking when the mysterious smile played over her face. Suppose she were

to say: "I'm smiling for the perfectly simple reason that I have nothing to say to your remark. I don't know how to answer compliments, really. Should I say thank you, or should I say, Oh, Mr. Lane, or what? I honestly don't know what to do, so I smile. That seems to cover everything."

But there was no sense in doing that. He wouldn't believe her, anyway, and besides if it pleased him to think her mysterious, so much the better. It saved her a lot of trouble. It was a beautiful way to get out of doing things you didn't want to, or committing yourself to anything, or admitting your ignorance about a subject. All you had to do was to smile mysteriously. The other people did the rest.

"I'll get behind that smile some day," Bud said. "You're a fascinating little thing, do you know it?" Eleanor smiled.

In the living room Hank Wells was clamoring for food.

"Please give me something to eat before I go," he said. "I renounced that ten dollar banquet for your sweet sake, now the least you can do is feed me."

"All right, in a minute, you poor starving creatures." Roberta, moved to action at last, climbed over several people and went into the kitchenette. "Somebody's got to help me," she said. "Come along, Billy. Eva and Tom are exempt 'cause they went to the store, and Eleanor is company this once. Hank's a working man so he's let off. Let's see, you come, Margery, you haven't done a thing all evening. I won't take Dicky Barclay or Ruth, they always break dishes. Bud, how about you?"

"Nothing doing. I'm busy. Take Miller, he ought to work for his food."

"Come along then, Stan." She went into the kitchen-

ette, followed reluctantly by Miller and Billy Tracy. In a few minutes the boys came out with platters full of sandwiches, Bobbie wheeled a tea cart laden with olives and pickles and little cakes and things to drink. Everybody took what they wanted.

After eating about eight sandwiches and as many cakes, Hank Wells swallowed his third and final cup of coffee and went out to his neglected story.

"Hope your illusions aren't altogether shattered, Miss Hoffman," he laughed as he said good-by to her. "Some day have lunch with me downtown and I'll show you the *Star* city room. That's altogether against my principles, but I feel I owe you something for not saying 'what a fascinating occupation you have.' Give me a ring at the *Star* any day at one-thirty, we'll eat together. Don't forget, now."

No, she wouldn't, Elly said. She wondered if that were his usual procedure, and decided that it must be, as nobody appeared at all surprised. She'd never called up a man in her life. Her mother had taught her not to.

"Never run after any man," Mrs. Hoffman always counseled. "Let them run after you. It never does a girl a bit of good to let a man know she likes him. And if you call them up they have no respect for you." And that was quite true of the boys she knew. She'd heard them many times laughing about the girls who telephoned them at home or at their fraternity house.

But these people seemed different. They were more casual in their relations with each other. If you had some reason for calling up a man you did, without sacrificing his respect. It didn't, apparently, make him think you were chasing him. They seemed to regard each other as human beings, instead of dividing up into two

antagonistic groups as men and women. And yet there was no attitude of not being interested in each other as men and women. Certainly Bud Lane was displaying more than a boy to a boy interest in her. She interested him as a girl, and it was easy to see that Tom Berry was crazy about Eva. As for Roberta, they were all more or less victims of her charms. No, they were just different. Wonderfully different. She would call Henry Wells some time. There was nothing in the world she'd like so much as seeing a newspaper office.

At half past eleven she asked Bud to take her home.

"You know what I told you before," she said. "I want to be able to do this again. And it may seem funny to you, but I had an awful time getting here to-night, and if I stay too late my mother will simply clamp the lid down again." They left, Bud driving Tubby's car.

"Put this blanket around you," he said, "then you won't be cold. Look, must we go right straight home? Couldn't we drive around for a few minutes? I don't know when I'll see you again, and I want a few minutes alone with you." Eleanor demurred, but in the end he won, and before he dropped her at the door of number 504 West End Avenue, they had driven up Riverside Drive as far as Inspiration Point. Bud gave evidence of slowing down, but Elly stopped him.

"No parking here," she said. "Really, I've got to get home. You understand, don't you?" Bud smiled.

"Yes, of course I do. We'll go right away. You're an awfully sweet little thing. I can't believe that anyone can be as clever as you are and yet so unsophisticated. No, it isn't that. That doesn't sound right either. You are sophisticated enough, theoretically. I believe there's nothing you don't know, and still there's something about

you that makes me want to sort of take care of you. You seem to be sort of unpracticed. That's it. Unpracticed. You make people want to be nice to you. To help you. Believe me, I don't feel that way about many girls I meet nowadays. I wonder what it is in you? Do you know?" Eleanor shrugged her shoulders and smiled slowly.

It was just a few minutes after midnight when they said good night at her door.

"Good-by," she said. "Thank you for bringing me home."

"Good-by, sweet thing." He moved almost imperceptibly toward her. She moved almost imperceptibly away.

"All right," he said quite gravely, "I won't. This time. But some other time I will. Good night." He lifted up her hand and touched it ever so lightly with his lips, then turned and went back to the car. He got in, turned, waved at her and drove off. She went upstairs.

2

In their room Muriel was waiting for her with some interest.

"Have a good time?" she asked sleepily, looking up from her magazine.

"Yes, lovely."

"Meet any nice boys?"

"Yop. Several. One of them brought me home."

"What's his name?"

"Lane. David Lane. They call him Bud 'cause one of his middle names is Buddington. He has a couple of middle names."

"Oh. Not Jewish."

"No. None of them was."

"Oh, mother was saying before she supposed they weren't. That's why she didn't want you to go, I guess. She has a perfect horror of us getting friendly with Gentiles. Not that I'm likely to. I don't seem to feel comfortable with them. What did you do?"

"Do? Nothing. We just sat around and talked. I can't remember anything special. Then we had something to eat, and then I came home. This boy drove me up. He and his roommate are down from Princeton. He knows Ted."

"What did you have to eat?"

"Oh, sandwiches and coffee."

"That all?"

"Uh-huh. It's a little place, you know. Only two rooms. The girls made the sandwiches themselves and we all just grabbed what we wanted."

"H'm. Doesn't sound very exciting to me. G'night."

"Oh, listen, Gerry's party is formal. Wear your evening dress. Irving Houseman and his friend, Chester Adelstein are coming to call for us."

"Night."

When she thought back over the evening it was hard for Eleanor to know just why she had enjoyed it so much. True, as Muriel's unexpressed contempt had reminded her, nothing had happened. They had just sat around and talked. Not even about anything particularly interesting or important. But just the same she had loved it, every minute of it. And how well she had fitted in with the people. Although they were new to her, not only as individuals, but also as a kind, she seemed to belong there, to be perfectly familiar in some internal way, with their ideas and their ways. She felt happy, right. These were people who lived the way she wanted

to live. They were free in spirit. There wasn't one among them who would rightfully come under her mother's sneering and bitter classification, "eccentric"; they were all normal, as a matter of fact perfectly commonplace people, only they seemed to be living according to some sort of individual plan, not according to a system. Just having been with them made her feel liberated. It was encouraging, because if these people, who weren't particularly eccentric or queer could live that way, there must be hundreds of people in the world outside her own who did. And she could, too. For a while she's thought you had to have some special gift in order to live the way you wanted to, to break away from the pattern if you didn't fit into it, but now she knew it was not as hard as that. No, the only hard part would be in the personal struggle to get away from the pattern. The pattern to which her mother and sister so naturally conformed that they couldn't see why anyone else didn't.

She wondered about her father. He seemed to conform to it closely enough now, but she thought she detected irregularities in the weaving around him, broken threads. His very readiness to understand, if not to condone with her inadequately expressed desires, made her believe that when he had been her age or perhaps a little older, he had tried to break from the pattern. Poor dad. She couldn't help feeling a little sorry for him because he had failed. She wouldn't fail. She would get away.

She thought about Bud Lane. It was funny, his attitude. She supposed it would be hard for him to understand how near to the truth he'd been when he had called her unpracticed. She really was. She was eighteen years old, not in the least unsophisticated or "innocent" in the moving picture sense of the word, but she could count on

one hand the number of times she'd been kissed, not including the silly little games the Sunday School crowd always played at parties. Really kissed by boys that she liked. The first time was that evening—how long ago it seemed, a million years—when she had promised Irving to wait for him. She'd been fifteen then. And it was all right to kiss a boy if you were engaged to him. So she had let him. She remembered now being rather disappointed. It hadn't seemed very thrilling.

And because it hadn't seemed very thrilling it had been easy enough to obey her mother's often repeated injunction, "Never let a boy kiss you. They all like to try it, but if you let them do it they won't respect you. You can't be too careful. It's awfully easy for a girl to lose her reputation. And once it's lost you can never get it back."

She had believed all that. Every word of it. And she hadn't let boys kiss her. Irving had once or twice again, before they quarreled about Ted Levine. And Ted. Of course he had kissed her. Not because he had a crush on her, or thought she had one on him. He'd taken pains to make that clear. But Ted was a masterful young man and girls were meant to be kissed. So he had kissed her. She had thought it strange at the time that she liked his kisses better than Irving's, although she'd been awfully crazy about Irving at the time, and not at all crazy about Ted. He did it better or something. But even then she hadn't found it particularly thrilling. Ted knew it, too, and was annoyed, but he never tried to kiss her again.

Then there was that time at Fay Wallberg's New Year's Eve party when Jim Wallberg, Fay's cousin, had cornered her in the hall and kissed her quite disagreeably. Jim was older than the others by several years.

"You little devil, you," he'd said under his breath, "I've always wanted to kiss you ever since I've known you. You have such a soft little mouth." She struggled and squirmed but he held her frightfully close and kissed her again. Of course she might have screamed, but somehow she couldn't. Some instinct told her that in situations like these the only thing is to submit and get away as quickly as possible. She knew without being told or ever having experienced it, that people would think she'd encouraged him, wanted him to kiss her. So she remained there quietly, making herself as rigid as she could in his arms, and keeping her lips tightly shut under his mouth.

"You're a cold little devil, aren't you?" Jim had said. "I could thaw you out, though, if I had the chance. No girl has ever had a mouth like yours and been really cold. You're just a smouldering volcano."

Then there had been a noise down the hall. Someone was coming, and he let her go. She ran to Fay's bedroom to fix her hair where he had mussed it.

She had not washed her mouth with soap, or anything like that, although, according to tradition that would have been the thing to do. But she had been frightfully annoyed by it, and the experience, while it did not scar her young soul, did not increase her interest in the subject of kissing. It was, she had long since come to the conclusion, an occupation greatly overestimated. She wanted no credit for being an unkissed girl. It wasn't a matter of virtue triumphant, although it was but recently that she began to suspect that maybe her mother's point of view might be open to argument. She just wasn't interested. Bud Lane had called her unpracticed. He had wanted to kiss her, but had refrained, because she called out some protective instinct in him. That, it seemed to

Elly, was a rather big asset. She was beginning, now that she had definitely determined to get free of her mother's system, to discard subconsciously a great many of the theories she had more or less accepted without question. The first faint stirrings of an experimental tendency made themselves active in her mind. There were things she wanted to know about. She'd never known any boy really well since Irving's interest in her had waned. There'd been nobody to interest her even faintly excepting Ted Levine, and he lived out of New York. Anyway, he was away now at college.

She'd always had boys enough to take her to parties and to dance with and to go to matinees and football games with, but there'd been little or no lovemaking, even of the mildest sort. They were so seldom alone together, these boys and girls of the Temple set, and other parallel sets. Elly was only now beginning to realize how absolutely shut in she had been all these years. She wanted to know. Of course she had always wanted to know about abstractions, but now she found herself wanting to know about concrete things. What made Bud Lane have that feeling about her? Was he only one who would feel that way, or would other men want to take care of her too? She must find out. Oh, there was a whole world of things that she must find out about. Everything.

CHAPTER VII

I

GERALDINE NUSSBAUM's Hallowe'en party on Thursday night brought Eleanor in contact with her old friends for the first time in several months. It was rather a large party. When she and Muriel arrived, about thirty people, most of whom Eleanor had gone to Sunday School or Wadleigh with, or whom she had met at Delta Omega teas, or something of the sort, were dancing around the polished floor of the magnificent living room of the Nussbaum apartment on Riverside Drive and 76th Street.

The girls were rather late, but it was not their fault. Chester Adelstein the friend Irving Houseman brought along to call for them, had arrived at Irving's house fifteen minutes after the appointed time, and added to that there had been some sort of traffic delay. Chester Adelstein didn't mind, he said.

"It never hurts to keep a girl waiting," he told Irving. "She'll have some respect for you if you do. I don't believe in humoring girls. Let' em know you're no poor fool for them to play with and you'll really get somewhere with 'em."

Chester who was in Irving's class at Columbia Law School, was the son of one of the wealthiest and most widely known lawyers in New York, in the country even.

In a year Chester would enter the offices of Adlestein, Mendolson, Harris and Adelstein, and start from the bottom. There was to be no favoritism shown. No ad-

vantages, because he was the chief's son. Of course, if he progressed very rapidly he would be promoted accordingly, and with a father like his it was fairly safe to assume that he might progress more rapidly than the ordinary law clerk. At least that was the way Chester felt about it.

His father was exceedingly generous. Chester drove his own car, had charge accounts in every shop and restaurant in town as well as a generous allowance. His father didn't approve of stinting the boy. He would some day be the sole controller of a pretty big fortune, and it was well to let him know how to spend money. Not that they were snobs. Not at all. Why, hadn't he sent Chester to public high school?

Chester had borrowed his mother's town car for the evening. It was a trifle chilly for his open Cadillac, and, besides, a town car would make more of an impression on a girl, and Chester was determined to make an impression on Eleanor. He had heard quite a good deal about her, and the things he had heard had fired his imagination. She was a queer girl, several people had told him, but clever, awfully clever. And cold as ice. Never suspect it to look at her, either, with her red hair and that mouth. Still lots of fellows had tried to make love to her, and she hadn't even seemed to recognize the symptoms. Yop, a cold proposition.

That was what Chester liked. He loved the idea of meeting this cold proposition and warming her up. He wanted to show people how mistaken they were about her. Cold? Just until she met the right man.

"I'm charmed to meet you," he said formally to the two girls when Irving introduced them. "I've heard so much about you both. Shall we start right away? I'm afraid I've kept you waiting. Sorry, I'm sure."

They left at once. Chester helped Eleanor into the car, leaving Muriel for Irving. He spoke to the chauffeur.

"Go on, James. You have the address." James did not answer. He merely touched his visored cap.

"One of the few servants," Chester said, "who really knows his place. We never have to discipline James. He's perfectly aware that he is a servant and acts accordingly. I don't believe in this business of democracy when it's brought right down to the servants. They can't be as good as we are or they wouldn't be our servants. And James knows that." He settled himself into the deeply upholstered seat with an audible sigh of satisfaction.

"How lovely that his name is James," said Eleanor.

"Why, what difference does it make?"

"Oh, lots of difference. It's no particular fun to say 'home, Oswald,' or 'home, Harry,' but it must be loads of fun to say 'home, James.' Don't you giggle every time you say it?"

"No," replied Chester, somewhat disapprovingly, "I can't see anything very humorous in that." Muriel squeezed Elly's hand in the dark.

It took only about ten minutes to reach the Nussbaum apartment. Gerry herself flew to answer the bell when they rang.

"Well, I thought you were never coming," she exclaimed, kissing Muriel and Eleanor. "What on earth kept you so long?"

"It wasn't our fault," Muriel said, "the boys came late. We were ready for them, weren't we, Elly?"

"I'll bet a million dollars," Gerry declared, "Chester was at the bottom of it. He thinks it's clever to be late." Chester glowered, and made no reply.

"Oh," squealed Gerry, as the girls removed their wraps, "what marvelous dresses! Where did you get them?" They did look rather lovely, both of them, Muriel in her pretty, wholesome girlishness, appropriately gowned in rose taffeta, round as to neck and bouffant as to skirt, with garlands of tiny rosebuds appliqued upon it at intervals, and a delicate wreath of them in her brown wavy hair; Eleanor most effective in brown lace over a shimmering gold foundation, with an orange chiffon girdle whose ends almost trained the floor.

"That sash is just the color of your hair," Gerry exclaimed. "And so appropriate for Hallowe'en. C'mon inside. You don't need any powder yet. The girls are just dying to see you."

The girls flocked around Eleanor. Once she had been their leader, and if she no longer was, they were still devoted to her in a way, and excessively curious about her new activities.

"How's art school?"

"Is it hard? Are you sorry you didn't go to Training School? Don't you miss Muriel frightfully?"

"Any nice fellows there? Lots of Gentiles, I suppose. Pretty soon you'll be getting too swell for your old friends. What's new, anything?" This last with a significance as strong as though the actual words had been spoken.

"For the love of Pete," Eleanor said, laughing, "how can I answer all those questions at once? Art school's wonderful, I'm crazy about it and I'm tickled to death I didn't go to Training, even though it does seem funny to be without Muriel. There are lots of nice boys there, but I don't know any of them well yet. You have to work pretty hard to keep up with your classes; it's no snap, believe me, and you don't get much of a chance

to fool around with the people. I did meet a couple of awfully nice girls, though, and I've been to their apartment—it's a kind of studio—a couple of times."

"Jewish?" asked Hilda Adler.

"Nope."

"Oh," rather flatly.

"Let's dance," called Jim Weisskopf from across the room. "C'mon somebody, put on a record." He walked over to the phonograph and chose a record himself—"Underneath the Stars," a sweet and sentimental fox trot hit. Chester walked over to where Eleanor was sitting and claimed the dance.

"This is a lovely record," he said. "Come and dance with me. This is our first dance together and I predict that we will have many more." They danced well together, although there was nothing extraordinary about it. Chester held her quite close and she found after a time that his right hand weighed rather heavily upon the base of her neck, where he held it.

Chester talked while he danced.

"At last!" he said, dancing down the long hall with her. "Do you know that I've wanted to meet you for more than a year?"

Eleanor smiled.

"Did you want to meet me?" he asked.

"Well I couldn't very well, I only heard about you two nights ago." Chester stared at her.

"You mean to say you've never heard of me before?"

"Oh, I knew there was such a person as Chester Adelstein, but nobody has ever spoken about you to me, that's all. Is that so strange?" Chester drew himself up.

"So many people knew I was interested in you," he said, "that I think it is rather strange that they never

said anything to you about me. I suppose even if they had you'd never admit it. Girls think they have to be that way."

Eleanor smiled.

"Don't be tiresome," she said. "If I'd heard about you I'd admit it. I always admit everything. I always say what I mean and mean what I say. If you'll accept that as the basis of our acquaintance we'll get along beautifully."

Oh, then she was interested in him. She must be, or she wouldn't speak that way. "The basis of our acquaintance." That must mean she expected to continue seeing him. That was good. She certainly was an attractive girl. Worth conquering.

"Let's sit down here for a while," he said, leading her to an alcove down the hall. "I want to talk to you without a lot of people coming around, and interrupting us."

"All right. What do you want to talk about?"

"You, of course. Do you know that you have the reputation of being very cold?"

"Have I? I didn't know it, really."

"Well, you have. And I'm glad. I don't like girls to let fellows get fresh with them. Nice girls don't. But just the same I don't believe you're really cold. You couldn't be with that flaming hair and that warm mouth. No! It's just that you haven't met the right man yet. I know your kind. Like ice until they meet the right one, and then, oh boy! Why, you're just a smouldering volcano."

Eleanor smiled. A reminiscent light came into her eyes. Hadn't she heard that before somewhere? Didn't men ever think of anything else to say?

"What's the joke?" asked Chester. "I can't see any-

thing funny about it. You *are* a smouldering volcano, some day you'll see."

"I think we'd better go back inside," Eleanor said. "You know, I haven't seen these people for a long time, and I really want to be with them a little." He rose, somewhat unwillingly, and they returned to the living room.

"Oh," shrieked Hilda Adler, "where have you been? Are you vamping Chester? Better look out for her Chester, she's dangerous." Eleanor flushed with annoyance. She loathed the word—vamping—a newly coined expression that had come into popular favor along with a moving picture siren of the moment. It had not yet become a casual part of the language, and its sound was ugly to Eleanor. However, she did not answer, and moved away from Hilda, whose shrill voice clung to the subject.

"Look at her," she cried, "blushing. I must have been right." Chester glared as though he would annihilate her.

There was more dancing, a great deal of activity, and a quantity of talk about clothes and conquests among the girls, football and conquests among the boys.

"And she just ran after him like a crazy fool!" Hilda's voice, happy in its medium, gossip, shrilled on. "He practically had to leave the city to get rid of her. She called up his house and he got his mother to answer and say he was out, and then she'd leave her name. Absolutely shameless. The poor fool. I'd like to know who she thinks would ever marry her after that?"

" . . . squirrel's better. I think seal is too old for you. After all, you're only a young girl once. Why should you try to look like an old woman?"

“. . . Really think they're going to announce their engagement soon. How about it, Fay? Everybody's talking about it. Why don't you tell us. C'mon." Fay, quite lovely in her tall, slightly exotic way, smiled significantly.

"I really can't say anything about it just yet. Nothing's been settled. But . . ."

"But you are going to. You needn't say another word. When you going to announce it?" She smiled, acknowledging the defeat for which she had so gracefully maneuvered.

"Oh, well, I might as well tell you, but don't tell anyone else. We'd rather not let it get public yet. As soon as he comes back we'll announce it."

"How about the stage?" asked Eleanor.

"Oh, I suppose that's out now. I always thought I wouldn't marry until I was about thirty, so I could have my career first. But I guess you just say that to yourself in case you never marry. It's a good alibi."

A maid announced supper. Gerry got up, dropped a set of little cards into a Ruskinware bowl and another set into its mate.

"Now," she said, "the girls pick a card out of this bowl, and the boys out of that one. Fit the names together, and you'll find your supper partner."

"Ooh," screamed Hilda Adler, the first to grab a card, "I'm Juliet. Isn't that romantic? Who's Romeo? Oh, my God," she groaned as her brother waved his card at her. "Put it back and pick another. I can't go to the table with you."

Amid a great deal of laughter and excitement the business of picking partners was gone through. And at the

end, after a little skilful manipulation among the boys, everybody got the girl he wanted.

"Oh, gee," wailed Gerry, "that's no fair. Just what I try to avoid, having the same old people sit together. Just as though you were married."

"You're crazy," said Irving Houseman. "If we were married we wouldn't want to sit together, would we, Muriel?" Her answer was lost in the stampede for the dining-room, which was dimly lighted, and decorated with jack-o'-lanterns, black cats and leering skulls. Festoons of orange crêpe paper hung from the chandelier to the table, in the center of which was a huge paper pumpkin, with orange ribbon trailing from its middle to each of the thirty-four places.

"Doesn't it look stunning!" exclaimed the girls. "Gerry always gives such wonderful affairs."

"Pull your ribbons," commanded Gerry excitedly, and there was a great yanking from all sides. The paper pumpkin gave way at the top, and opened up like a flower, disclosing the souvenirs of the occasion.

There were flat leather match cases with gold corners for the boys, and tiny gold powder cases, monogrammed, for the girls. Excited shrieks greeted them.

"How cute!"

"How perfectly adorable."

"Oh, Gerry, they're marvelous!"

Then rapid consumption of food. The supper was elaborate. Mrs. Nussbaum was noted for the excellence of her parties. This supper was a catered one. It began with fruit cocktails, served in scooped out grapefruit skins, cut into the shape of baskets, with real handles. Then there was a kind of mousse made of salmon, very rich and delicious, and every conceivable variety of sand-

wich, on tiny pieces of bread, cut into fancy shapes. There were salted nuts, of course, and olives and things like that, and chicken à la king after the sandwiches. Marvelous ice cream in forms and French pastry, with coffee for those who wanted it. There were all kinds of soft drinks during the meal, but no suggestion of anything intoxicating. Drinking was an unheard of thing in that set and at that time.

Elly sat between Chester Adelstein and Ben Adler at supper. Directly across from her was Muriel, apparently very much engrossed in Irving, who seemed, in return, to be quite taken with her. It occurred to Elly for the first time that there was a growing intimacy between her sister and the boy with whom she'd fancied herself in love only five years ago. How funny it would be if they actually got married. And wouldn't the crowd talk! Not that it would matter.

"A penny for your thoughts," Chester Adelstein said, as Elly sat gazing speculatively at Muriel. She smiled.

"You wouldn't find them a bit interesting."

"I would if they were about you," he said.

"Well, as a matter of fact," Eleanor replied, "they weren't. They were about my sister."

"Oh." He shrugged and made a little face. "Then you needn't bother telling me. Not that I don't like your sister," he hastened to add, "but I don't find her stimulating, the way I do you. You're an awfully interesting girl, do you know that?"

"Yes," she said, "I know it." He stared at her.

"You hate yourself, don't you?"

"I can't see what that has to do with it," Eleanor argued. "You tell me I'm interesting and ask if I know it. I do, so why should I be coy and pretend I don't?"

I simply won't bother to be something I'm not; it's too much trouble."

"You're refreshing," said Chester in a lofty tone. "It's rather amusing, but I don't know that I should care for such a point of view in the girl I make my wife."

"Well, you're not going to make me your wife, so that's all right."

"Oh, you can't tell. I'm not sure I will want you, but I might, and so far I've always been able to get what I wanted."

"I'll tell you what," said Eleanor, "this is a very interesting conversation, and I don't mind admitting that I'm enjoying it, but I think it might be a good idea to continue it some other time, because in a minute Hilda will crash in with something that'll probably be annoying. I can tell by the way she's looking at us out of the corner of her eye."

They had been at the table nearly two hours when they finally went back into the living room to dance again. Chester tried on several occasions to get Eleanor back into the little recess in the hall to continue their talk, but each time she had to dance with someone else, or speak to someone else. Chester sulked. Just like a girl, he thought. If she thought that increased her value in his eyes she was very much mistaken. No girl could treat him that way.

On the way home he asked her when he could come to see her. She didn't want to make a date with him right then, because she had an idea that Bud Lane might come down for the week end, and she wanted to be able to see him if he called. She felt pretty sure he would call her.

"Oh, give me a ring some morning," she said, "I don't

leave for school until quarter past nine. We can make a date for that night."

"Not I," said Chester, "I'm always dated up at least two weeks in advance."

"I'm not. I think it's silly. I like to be ready for the nice unexpected things when they come along, even though they usually don't come."

Muriel and Irving lingered over their good night. Eleanor could see that they wanted to kiss each other, but there didn't seem to be anything she could do about it. She would like to have told them simply to go ahead, but she didn't think that would serve. So instead, she hurried Muriel away.

"Come along, I'm cold," she said. "Sleepy, too. So long, Irving. Good night, Mr. Adelstein."

Chester held her hand.

"Good night. It has been very interesting, meeting you." His tone shifted from an exceedingly formal one which sounded to Eleanor almost as though he had rehearsed the lines, to one filled with significance, as he added:

"You'll hear from me."

2

The girls walked through the hall to the elevator in silence. Chester had wanted to ride upstairs with them, insisting that it was the correct thing to do, but in the end, they'd gone up alone.

"My God," Muriel giggled, as they rode upstairs, "what a pill."

"Yes, he is funny," Eleanor agreed, "but he interests me."

"Anyone would who fell that hard for you at first

sight," admitted Muriel. "You do get the funniest men, really. One freak after another. Ted Levine and this, and a whole bunch of other lemons. How is this one you met last night, queer, too?"

"No. I don't think so. But you might not agree. I don't think Ted's a lemon."

"I know it. Do you know, I believe you're secretly in love with Ted." Eleanor grew red. It wasn't true, but it made her blush.

"Don't be silly. He's the last person in the world I could fall for, but I do admire him very much. How about you and Irving, by the way?" It was Muriel's turn to blush.

"I don't know. He seems pretty fond of me, and I think he's wonderful. You don't care about him any more, do you?"

"No. Take him with my blessings. Think you'll get engaged?"

"Probably next spring. But don't say anything to mother yet."

"No." They unlocked the door as gently as possible, but Mrs. Hoffman, who was in bed but not asleep, heard them, and called.

"Did you have a good time, children?" she asked.

"Wonderful," said Muriel, and Eleanor said "yes."

"My, but you're enthusiastic," was her mother's comment. "What did they serve?" She was told, exclaimed, asked a few more questions, and let them go.

"I'm not a bit sleepy," Muriel said, making tentative moves toward a conversation and confidential séance, "are you?"

"Yes," said Elly, "I'm dead tired. And I have to get up awfully early in the morning." She didn't as a matter of

fact, and she wasn't tired, but there were some things in the back of her mind, things that she had tucked away earlier in the day, and was keeping them for that delicious few minutes just after turning out the light. Now she was eager to take them out and look at them, play with them, the way you would with some bits of beautiful silk or colored beads with a lot of light in them. Eleanor's thoughts always took a tangible form. Everything had color or line, or she could feel it, as though it were a fabric.

Now in bed, these precious things came tumbling out of her mind, one by one and mixed up with each other, just like bolts of gay silk being unwound and flung across a counter, or strings and strings of amber gleaming on her arm.

School. Her new friends, Eva and Roberta. Tuesday night's party. The newspaper men. Oh, she mustn't forget to call up that tall one, what was his name? She did want to see a newspaper office. Bud Lane. He was a dear. Unpracticed. He'd called her unpracticed with the tenderest note in his voice when he said it. . . . Chester, who had challenged her . . . A pill, yes, Muriel was right, but she was going to have a date with him just to find out some more.

That was it. She was going to find out everything from now on. She was going to experiment. How could you ever know anything about living if you didn't experiment? She must experiment, but she mustn't get tripped up. Oh, no, she mustn't fall in love with any of these people she experimented upon, because that would interfere with her freedom. And that was the most important of all. She must get free and stay free. She cast about in her mind for some way of putting the intense feeling

that had hold of her, and all she could find were trite phrases. "I want to live my own life." "I want to call my soul my own." Both phrases somewhat in discredit, outworn, utterly humorless. She suddenly knew the reason. They were trite because they were so literally true. What else could you say about the way she felt than that you wanted to call your soul your own? She tossed in bed, and grew more and more excited. Thoughts whizzed around in her head until it ached. She twisted and turned and made a noise. Muriel grumbled.

"For the love of Pete," she said, "get settled. If you're so sleepy why don't you go to sleep?" Elly didn't answer. She wished she had a room of her own. Muriel was all right, but she wanted to be alone. Involuntarily came the thought of what her mother would say if she ever asked for a room of her own.

The thoughts chased themselves around in circles. Bud. Chester. Ted. How did he get there? Certainly he had nothing to do with the past few days. Oh, yes, she had spoken to Bud about him. She wondered how he was. She felt exhilarated now, just as she used to feel after an evening with him. Suddenly an idea came to her. Maybe she'd better keep a diary. Important things were happening to her, and there should be some record of them. Maybe she'd be a writer some day, and then these things would be valuable. It would be nice to be a writer. Then you'd have some use for the results of your experiments. Another thing, if you were going to be a writer it justified anything you might do. You had to Live in order to write well.

She got out of bed and fumbled about in the dark for her bathrobe. As quietly as possible she tiptoed down the hall to the library, where, after hunting for a few minutes

she found an old blank book with some high school botany notes in the first few pages. Carefully she tore out the notes and wrote on the first page, The Diary of Eleanor Hoffman, New York, October, 1916. Then on the second page she wrote the date for her first entry.

October 27. She paused, biting the end of her pen. It was cold in the library; the steam in the radiator was dying for the night with a series of loud gurgling raps. It was hard to hold on to the mood of exhilaration. She wrote:

This is the first time I have ever made a record of my thoughts and feelings, but I intend to continue doing so from now on. Nobody will ever see this diary, so I can be perfectly frank and strictly honest. I will begin with last night when I met Bud Lane. His real name is David Horace Buddington Lane and he is a senior at Princeton. I like him very much. I think he is going to get a crush on me but I am not sure. He started to kiss me last night but stopped when he saw I didn't want him to.

She paused again, and read what she had written. It didn't look very interesting. Something seemed to go out of her the minute she tried to get the thoughts on paper. Somehow they eluded her efforts to catch them. None of the excitement and color that she felt found its way into her sentences. Maybe it was because she was cold. She guessed she'd stop for the present, and try again some other time.

That's all for now, she wrote. *I will come back to you again, diary.* Apostrophizing the diary that way made her think of something. Once she had gone home to study algebra with Marie Scott, a very pretty and popular girl in her class in Wadleigh. They had studied a little

while, and then Marie had talked to Eleanor about her love affairs. It seemed she had a great many. At the time she was in the midst of renouncing an Italian artist. She was keeping a diary, and after getting Elly to swear she'd never breathe it to a soul, she had let her look at the diary. There was a complete record of each of her affairs with frequent references to "Diary dear," and "oh, beloved diary." And several letters she had written were copied into the records. Eleanor had said nothing at the time, but she had laughed inwardly at "diary dear." That had seemed awfully funny, and somehow she couldn't quite feel that Marie's record was kept just for herself. Sure enough, she had learned later, in talking to some other girls, that Marie had shown them the diary,—each one alone, and each one with the same oath not to tell about it.

That incident was suddenly very clear in Elly's mind as she looked at what she had just set down. Something happened inside of her. She ripped the page from the book and tore it into small pieces which she threw into the waste basket. After they were in the basket she bent down, picked them out and burned them. She put the book back where she had found it, and went shiveringly back to bed.

The excitement was gone, and the gayly colored thoughts, too, but other thoughts came to take their place. She wouldn't keep a diary, after all. She'd simply have to remember the things that happened to her. Apparently, they lost their magic when you tried to take them out of your head and put them on paper.

That settled that, then. No diary. In a little while she was asleep.

CHAPTER VIII

I

SCHOOL was coming to mean more and more to Eleanor. The work, while she did not have a passionate interest in it, was eminently satisfactory. It was something pleasant to do that she did quite naturally, and with more than the ordinary amount of skill, although there was nothing in it to suggest a potential genius. She liked to draw; she had a nice feeling for line and color, she had a touch of originality. Her instructors were pleased with the progress she was making, and said so. Even John Lyman Carver, who was sparing in his praise, dropped an encouraging word on a number of occasions. Eleanor, when these things happened, was transported. Her adoration for Carver continued in spite of Eva Gerrard's insistence that he was insincere.

She was rapidly fitting into a groove among the students, too, which helped. Eva and Roberta Burton, Tom Berry and Billy Tracy, and two or three other kindred spirits were in the habit of eating lunch together every day. After the party at Eva's apartment Elly was automatically included in these lunches. Sometimes the boys would go out and bring things in, and they would eat in one of the vacant classrooms. More often they would go out to one of the innumerable tea rooms or coffee houses in the neighborhood. To Eleanor it didn't matter. She was happy either way. Just to be with these people, who could talk so gayly over nothing and so earnestly over things that in her old crowd would have been

considered highbrow and pretentious, who were so relaxing and yet at the same time stimulating to her mind, was a wonderful thing to her.

And although she was the only Jew among them there was no feeling of restraint on her part. She thought of that often. Her life up to that autumn had been wholly Jewish in its contacts. She had known no Christians except a few girls in high school, and those quite casually.

She'd never thought about it particularly. It just was that all the people she knew were, as her mother so frequently said, her own kind. She began to feel now that this was even more arbitrary on her mother's part than she had suspected. Away from the closest influences of her life at home and with the Sunday School crowd, she turned instinctively to what appeared to her as her own kind. Something in her, something that had kept intact throughout the long years of the training her mother had given her, began to work its way to the surface of her consciousness.

It wasn't exactly new, the way she felt. She noted before the symptoms of her rebellion against the system of the West End Avenue aristocracy and all its numerous ramifications. She had realized long since that there was something inside her that involuntarily rejected a large part of the philosophy that was proffered her by her mother and Rabbi Goodman and all the people who represented that side of existence. And there had always been Ted Levine, the living symbol of her "queerness." Ted Levine and *The Way of All Flesh*. Of all the books she ever read, then or for the rest of her days, nothing ever came to mean so much as that one. She dated her thinking life with the reading of that book. It was the first thing to actually force her to wonder consciously

about the pattern. Then Ted. The two together had done a great deal. But they had made her unhappy.

That was the difference. This school crowd made her happy. Their very gayety and casualness helped her to get things straightened out in her mind. Ted Levine and Ernest Pontifex had harassed her while they made her think. It was she and they alone in an alien universe, so that often she felt that she and they must be wrong in the face of such solid wall of opposition. Now, however, she began to see that there was a universe of people who not only felt the way she felt about things, but who lived the way she wanted to live; people who did so, moreover, without being branded as queer or eccentric by the world at large.

This knowledge gave her a great deal of courage. She could carry on her battle for the freedom of her spirit with a far lighter heart. After all, she found, there is something to the theory of safety in numbers. She talked at great length with Eva, who seemed to have an instinctive understanding of her situation, although she had never actually known any people of the Hoffman's precise social place.

"What you need," she told Eleanor, more than once, "is to get away from home. I realize perfectly that that is terrible advice to give any girl, and your mother if she knew it would have me arrested for it. Just the same you'd be much better off. I don't mean now, at the very moment, but later, after you're out of school and are working. I have a feeling that you'll probably do awfully well after you're out. Your stuff is getting to be quite distinctive, and in a couple of years more it ought to be great. Then you should cut loose. You belong alone. At least you belong out of the life you're in now."

"Yes," agreed Elly, "there isn't any doubt of that. I never did get along very well in it. I've always wanted to live alone. Only it seemed too perfectly absurd to hope for it. If you could imagine the strength of our family life you'd understand. Why, do you know, that until I went to your house that first day, I'd never got home after my father in my whole life?"

"Well," Eva said thoughtfully, "I've always heard a great deal about the beauty of the Jewish home life, and the solidarity of the family."

"Yes," she said, "that's part of the act. It's true enough, the family is solid, all right, but as for the beauty, I suppose that depends upon your point of view. Everything's arranged in patterns. You have to fit into one of those patterns or else you're all wrong. For a while, when I was still pretty small, I accepted all that. But when I got to be about fourteen or so, I began to wonder about it. It really started on the very day I was confirmed in the Jewish faith. It worried me a lot then, but now it all seems very simple, and I think I can go ahead in a fairly straight line. Especially if I know there's someone kind of with me, like you. They always said I was too stubborn and contrary and something tells me I'm going to prove them right."

2

There was rather a fuss when the subject of Bud Lane came up. He did not come down the week end after the party, but he did come the following week end, and he did telephone her to ask if he might come to see her on Saturday night. Without consulting her mother she told him to come. At dinner that night, quite casually she mentioned it, ready for anything that might follow.

"I'm having company tomorrow night," she said, "a boy I met at Eva Gerrard's party." Her mother looked up sharply.

"What's his name?"

"David Lane."

"Jewish?"

"No," a shade defiantly. Mrs. Hoffman hesitated for a moment between an attitude of irritation and one of kindness. She decided on the latter.

"Now, Eleanor," she said gently, for her, "what's the idea? You know perfectly well, without my having to tell you, that I don't like you to do a thing like that. We've talked this thing over before, and you know exactly how I feel on the subject of Gentiles." Eleanor grew hot at the word. There was something almost venomous in the way her mother used it, as though it were an epithet.

"I know that," she said, "but I don't feel the way you do about it. I think it's very silly to think that the only nice people in the world are the ones who were born on the same street with you, and whose religious beliefs are the same as yours. And you don't have to talk of them as though they were toads."

"It's more than a matter of religious beliefs," her mother argued. "I'm not particularly religious, and you know it. It's just that I don't feel comfortable with Gentiles. There's a difference that can't be described, but I feel it."

"All right," Eleanor grew daring. "Nobody's asking you to associate with them. But I don't feel that difference you talk about. As a matter of fact I feel a darn sight more comfortable with the particular Gentiles I know just now than I ever did with my own kind, as you call them." Mrs. Hoffman raged.

"Eleanor Hoffman! How can you sit there at your own table and say such a thing to your own mother? Have you no respect? Milton, why don't you speak to her? Such a nerve. That's what comes from letting her go to art school and get her head filled with a lot of *stuss*. What are you learning except to talk fresh to your parents and go against your religion?" Mr. Hoffman said nothing. Muriel sighed.

3

Nothing more was said up to the time of Bud's appearance on Saturday night. He arrived at half past eight, bringing a yellow chrysanthemum and a box of Sherry's. Yes, Elly admitted to herself, he was just as nice looking as the picture of him she'd carried in her mind. Tan face and quiet blue eyes, neat taffy-colored hair, parted in the middle, hints of dimples when he smiled, which he did at seeing her. She opened the door when he rang.

"It's nice to see you again," he said. "You're awfully good to let me come tonight. I thought probably you'd have a date, but I took a chance just the same."

"I don't make dates very far ahead," Eleanor replied, leading him to the hall rack, where he hung his things. "You miss out on so many nice things if you do that."

"I don't know what you meant by that, but I'm going to take it as a compliment." They were both smiling quite happily as Eleanor led him into the library where the family was assembled for an inspection of the Gentile.

"Mother," she said, "this is Mr. Lane. My mother, Bud, my father, and my sister, Muriel."

"How do you do," said Bud gravely to Mrs. Hoffman.

"How do," replied Mrs. Hoffman rather shortly, in a voice that sounded angry, but which Eleanor knew was

merely somewhat embarrassed. To fill the breach Mr. Hoffman crossed the room and put out his hand.

"Glad to know you, sir," he said cordially. "Have a cigar."

"Thanks," said Bud, as he smiled and nodded to Muriel, in the far corner, "I don't use 'em."

"Just as well." Bud continued standing in the middle of the room. Eleanor looked anguished, Muriel amused, her mother worried and Mr. Hoffman quite happy.

"Have a chair." Bud sat down. "What do you think of the election?"

"Oh," replied Bud politely, "I b'lieve I'll vote for Hughes."

"No, don't do that. It's not wise. Never change horses in the middle of the stream. Look at Wilson. He kept us out of war, didn't he? And any man who keeps us out of this mess ought to be re-elected."

"The war is not over yet," said Bud.

"Oh, that's all right," went on Mr. Hoffman, warming up to his subject. "The danger's over now. If we didn't go in when the Lusitania was sunk, we'll never go in."

"It's a strange world," said Mr. Hoffman.

"Yes, it is," said Bud.

"It certainly is," said Mrs. Hoffman.

"Mother," spoke Muriel from the corner, "before Irving comes I'd like to show you how I want Miss Wilkins to fix my gray dress." As they left the room Eleanor shot her sister a look that was at once grateful and pleading. How to get rid of her father? It was funny the way he always took it for granted that the boys came to see him. Hints would never do. You had to blast him out!

It wasn't done very subtly, but then, thank goodness, with people like Bud you didn't have to be subtle about

such things. It was funny instead of being embarrassing. That was the nice thing about them. As she thought that Eleanor saw in a flash the difference between the Jews she had known, and Gentiles as personified by her new friends.

"We have no social ease," she thought, "as a class. No poise. That's at the bottom of everything. I wonder?" She made a note to talk to Eva about that. Eva knew so much.

"Mil-ton," came Mrs. Hoffman's voice, reverberating through the hall. "Commere a minute, I want you."

"See you later," said Mr. Hoffman, as he responded to the call. "I'd like to get your real opinion about the war."

He was gone.

Eleanor gave a comical sigh.

"See what a hit you've made? But I can't flatter you. He's the same way with every new boy who comes to the house. He seems to think they only come here to discuss politics with him."

"Lots of girls' fathers are like that. Well, now that he's gone, let's talk about something interesting."

"All right, what?"

"You. Tell me all about yourself. I've been thinking about you ever since that night at Eva's, practically all the time. Honestly. You're such a strange girl."

"I'm not really strange a bit."

"Yes, you are. Mysterious, the way you look out of those eyes. So mysterious. I'd give anything to know what's behind them, and what you mean by that smile. Won't you tell me?"

"Why not find out?" What was the use of telling him there was no mystery at all behind the eyes, and that the smile meant nothing in particular?

"I mean to. And the only way I can find out is to see you a lot. Look. Will you coöperate with me to that extent?"

"Yes. I like you, and I don't see any reason why we shouldn't see each other. Do you mind me saying that I like you? I mean, does it make you less interested in me because I admit I like you? Would you rather have me be coy and pretend I didn't, or at least assume indifference. You know, make you work?"

"No," he said. "It's only very inferior sorts of fellows who don't want to have girls admit they like 'em. They like to chase. Not me. I like an interesting girl, and nothing you could consciously do or say would make you uninteresting to me. The fact that you are willing to start on an equal basis of admitting you like me, only makes you more interesting, because it shows you're different from most other girls. God, how I hate that Daphne stuff! 'I'll run away and you run after me.' Ugh! It makes me sick. That's one of the things Tubby and I always include when we rate girls."

"You what?"

"We rate girls. We keep a sort of chart of all the girls we know, and whenever we meet a new one, we add her to it. We keep it in a loose leaf notebook so it's easy to put in new pages."

"What do you rate them on?"

"Five separate counts, twenty points on each. Looks first, of course. Dancing. Personality. Brains. That's divided into two parts—education and sense. Education doesn't mean necessarily what school they go to, but how much they know about the things we're interested in. What books they like, and all that sort of stuff. Then sense. That's where this Daphne act comes in. Sense is

really the biggest classification of them all, I mean it includes the most things. I can't explain it, exactly, but Tubby and I have it worked out pretty well. We have quite a big space for that, and we mark down all kinds of annotations like if they giggle, or think it's immoral to smoke, and stuff like that. Oh, it's a great system."

"You're pretty severe, aren't you?"

"Well, yes, but you have to be, really. It's great in case of an emergency. If you need a girl for a party, why you have this sort of file index and you just read it over to see if she'll fit in."

"It seems kind of horrid to me."

"It shouldn't. You look at it wrong. Everybody I know keeps a chart. The girls, too. Eve and Bobby keep them. I bet you will too, now." She smiled and colored faintly.

"That's only four counts," she reminded him. "What's the fifth?" He looked at her steadily for a moment.

"S. A.," still with his eyes on her.

"S. A.? What's that?"

"Sex appeal." Still he regarded her, rather inquiringly. The color in her cheeks deepened. Like "vamp," the word sex was still quite new to Eleanor. She had not yet grown used to it as a commonplace of conversation, casually mentioned, like dress or shoes or bread. It was still to her a word suggestive of unexplored, forbidden mysteries, and its use by Bud came as a definite shock. She felt for an infinitesimal part of a second as though an icy spray had suddenly been turned on her, or as though she had pricked her finger with a needle. She hoped Bud hadn't noticed it. She didn't want him to think she was annoyed.

"Oh," she said rather faintly, "how can you tell whether they have it?"

"Oh, easy," Bud replied. "You just get it. You feel it. It hits you. 'Course, one girl may not have it for the same two fellows, or sometimes she may. There are some girls who seem to have it for everybody. There's no way to describe it. And you can't always tell right off either. Some of 'em don't seem to have any the first time you meet 'em, and then they turn out to have more than anyone else. And sometimes you get it very strong when you first meet 'em, and later it all goes away. We have to revise that part of the chart quite often. More than any other. The looks and the dancing and the education and sense usually stay more or less the same, but the s. a. is tricky. You never can tell about it."

"It sounds interesting. But isn't it just another name for personality? Or charm?"

"Nope. Personality and charm are mixed up in it, but they're not it. I've known girls who were awfully sweet and charming and had a wonderful personality, but no s. a. And I've known girls who had an awful lot of s. a., and yet you couldn't call 'em charming. It's funny. Different things 'll get different people. I know a man in college who always gets it if a girl has red hair. It's mixed up with something that happened to him when he was a kid. He had a crush on his teacher when he was about twelve years old, and she was a pretty girl with red hair. Once he did an errand for her and she kissed him for it and he got an awful thrill, and ever since then he's been getting a thrill every time he sees a girl with red hair. He'd probably rate you the whole twenty on s. a. on account of your hair."

"My hair's not red."

"No, not exactly, but it's near enough."

"Have you put me in your loose leaf notebook?"

"Sure," Bud replied, "right away. But don't ask me what your rating is, because it's against the rules to tell. You're pretty high, though, I can tell you that. One of the highest I've ever had."

"That's nice. But you can't have any rating for me on education or dancing, because you don't know anything about my taste in reading and you've never danced with me."

"I know it. Well, it usually takes some time before you can get on to the book part of it, and I was going to ask you whether you'd go dancing after a while."

"It would be fun. I'm not afraid to have you test my dancing. I'm pretty good." She scanned his face eagerly, waiting for a comment.

"I imagine you would be," he said. "Where shall we go?"

"Really," she said, "you're great."

"Why all the sudden enthusiasm?"

"Well, when I said I was a good dancer you didn't say 'you hate yourself,' or anything blah like that. I like you, Bud, because I can be myself without having you think I'm crazy or pulling a line."

"That's your whole charm," he replied. "You are yourself. I'll tell you who said that about you. Levine. I looked him up after I met you, and we got to talking about you. He told me that. He said you were a wonderful girl. He said you didn't have a hell of a lot of humor about yourself, because you were too sincere, and sincere people can't be humorous about themselves. He said your sense of humor about things was great, and about other people, but you were working too hard to

get yourself free of something for you to have much humor about yourself."

"You must have discussed me at great length," Elly said, a faint chill in her voice.

"Don't get peeved 'cause I'm telling you this," Bud said. "He didn't say it in a critical way at all. He admires you tremendously. In fact, I think he's got a crush on you. He asked so many questions about how you looked and what you said about him and all stuff like that."

"Oh, no, he hasn't got a crush on me. He knows me too well. He's interested in me as a sort of pupil. It was Ted who first made me realize that I doubted the things they taught me in Sunday School, and it was Ted who first gave me the courage to refuse to be a teacher. I never could have done it without his help. How my mother hates him. Isn't it funny, whenever people do something that their relatives don't like, the relatives always put the blame on somebody else. I would have come around to this sooner or later, but my mother firmly believes that I never had a thought in any direction but hers until Ted put it into my head. She's always saying how he influenced me. It never seems to occur to her that if my mind had been set in her direction he couldn't have influenced me. It's so illogical. At the outside it could only have been his influence against hers, and it certainly doesn't speak well for hers, if his could overthrow it so easily."

"I know, but she doesn't see it like that. That would be too painful. How about dancing?"

"All right, let's. I'd rather not go downtown, though. There are a couple of places near here that have very good music. You don't care, do you?"

"Not particularly, as long as the music's all right."

"Let's get ready, then, and you come with me when I go to tell my mother I'm going out. She's a little awed by you because you're not Jewish, and she'll be less likely to make a fuss in front of you."

"Coward! I thought you were a free soul."

"I'm only getting free. It's a long and difficult process. Come along now."

She was right. Getting out was comparatively easy. The knowledge that her mother would be waiting to settle accounts with her when she got back, somehow didn't trouble Eleanor. Once they started dancing, everything else was overlooked. They danced perfectly together.

"I knew we would," Bud said, after they had swung into the first fox trot. "I'll break all rules and tell you that you rate twenty on your dancing."

"So do you. I'll start my chart with you."

He held her very close while they danced. She felt warm and glowing inside. Not excited, as contact with Ted had made her feel, but serene and very sure of herself. When the dance was over and they returned to their table she was emboldened to ask a question.

"Bud," she said, her eyes dilated, "I want to ask you something."

"Fire away."

"I'm not trying to pry into your rating; I just want you to say yes or no. Have I any s. a.?" She didn't mind saying the initials. That was easy.

"Too darn much, if you really want to know," he replied. "All the time I look at you I keep wanting to kiss you, and then you flash that 'protect me' look on me, and what can I do?" Elly laughed.

"I don't flash the look consciously," she said. "It was

born with me, and it doesn't really mean a thing. So you needn't pay any particular attention to that." The words surprised her. They'd just slipped out. She wondered if he would interpret them as a challenge and kiss her later. She more than half hoped he would.

He did. Not on the way home. In the taxi he observed the most rigid correctness, having a great contempt for "taxi-hounds." He was rather quiet during the short ride to West End Avenue, but when Eleanor started to say good night to him at the outer door of the apartment he demurred.

"Let me come up for a few minutes. I can't talk to you here."

"All right. I'll probably be killed, but I'm willing to chance it."

The elevator man was sleeping soundly, so they walked up the stairs. Halfway up the second flight Bud stopped at the window looking out to the court.

"Eleanor." He said it very low. She found herself suddenly in his arms, being kissed, tenderly. It was nice. She was quite silent, and altogether passive. Bud kissed her eyes, ever so gently. And her cheeks and her mouth. With a sudden movement she flexed her throat. She wanted him to kiss that too. He did, right in the little hollow where her pulse beat. That was the nicest of all.

"My dear," Bud said, "my dear." Elly still said nothing, but stood quietly within his arms, strangely at peace, and smiling. He kissed her mouth again. A sudden noise from below sent them scurrying upstairs.

"I don't think you'd better come in," Eleanor said, as she took out the key. "Mother'll be waiting to read me the riot act, and you'll only complicate matters."

"All right if you say so. But I hate to leave you. Can I see you tomorrow?"

"Call me up about eleven o'clock. I'll be able to tell better then. You sure you won't get bored with me if I let you see me so much? Don't you think I ought to keep you guessing a bit?" she teased.

"No, silly one. You couldn't bore me. Let me whisper something in your ear." She bent her head.

"I love you," he whispered. A delicious hot current went through her entire body at the words. They had never been said to her before.

"Good night," she said patting his hand. "You're a dear. Call me in the morning."

"Good night, dear."

Mrs. Hoffman was waiting up for her. Elly, knowing there was no use trying to get to bed without the interview, went straight into the library. By treating it matter-of-factly, she thought, she might be able to get away with it.

"How do you like him?" she said.

"He seems like a decent enough sort of boy. Kind of insipid looking, though. I don't care for such fair haired men. They have no character, as a rule. I don't particularly like the idea of your going out with him. Where did you go?"

"Lansdowne Terrace."

"Anyone you know there?"

"Quite a mob. I saw the Friedmanns with that cousin that's visiting them from New Orleans, and Dorothy Keller and her fiancé and quite a few others."

"They see you?"

"The Friedmanns did. I'm not sure about the rest."

"That's nice. Now the whole temple will know that my daughter is running around with a Gentile."

"Well, what of it? I can't see that it's any of their business, but if you think it is, why all I can say is that they might as well get used to it."

"What?"

"Yop. They might as well get used to it. And you, too, mother. You might as well resign yourself to the inevitable. I'm going to have whatever friends I like, and if some of them happen to be Christians, I'll have them, anyway. It makes no difference to me or to them, and after all, that's the only thing that counts, isn't it?"

"You mean to stand there and defy me?"

"Yes, as long as you insist. I could deceive you, of course, by pretending to do as you wish, and seeing my friends outside. But I won't do that for two reasons. In the first place, that would seem as though I thought I were doing something wrong, and I'm not. In the second place, it's too much trouble to deceive. I won't do it." Mrs. Hoffman was aghast.

"How dare you speak that way to your mother? You're a willful, impudent, disobedient girl."

"I know I'm willful. And I even admit that in this case I'm impudent and disobedient. But it's your fault. You forced me to be. Listen, mother, you don't own me. I'm not a piece of furniture that you can put anywhere you like and expect it to stay put. It's just your tough luck and mine that I don't happen to see things the way you do. And you think you can get inside my head and compel me to think as you think. Well, you can't. My will's as strong as yours; a little stronger, in fact, and the sooner you admit that to yourself the better off we'll both be. I know I'm impertinent. I want to be. I've been saving up

things to say to you for eighteen years, and here they are. You say I defy you, and I say yes. And I'll keep right on defying you as long as I need to." The storm of her own feelings overtook her, and she found herself suddenly sobbing.

"You'll be sorry," Mrs. Hoffman managed to articulate between astounded noises that came from her throat, "you'll be sorry some day for talking to me like that. Some day you'll realize that your mother knew best, and you'll regret the way you've spoken to me tonight. But I'll never forget it, and some time when you want something from me I'll just remind you of the things you told me."

"You won't have to," Eleanor replied sullenly. "I'll never forget them. You'll never give me a chance to. I don't expect to regret them."

CHAPTER IX

It took several days and the advent of Chester Adelstein to restore Mrs. Hoffman to anything like what passed with her for calm. It was nearly a week after the battle over Bud Lane that Elly came home from school and learned that Chester had telephoned.

"Chester Adelstein called you up," her mother said. "Just after you left. He said he'd call again tonight at seven."

"All right." She made up her mind that if he wanted to make a date with her she would do so. He was amusing in his fashion. Of course there wasn't a chance in the world of getting a crush on him, but she might learn some interesting things. Seven came and went without a call from Chester. After dinner she went into the library, picked up a sheet of writing paper and started idly to write a note to Ted Levine. She didn't owe him a letter. In fact, he'd owed her one for several months. But she had been reverting frequently to the things Bud had told her on Saturday night. It was funny, but her new friendship with Bud, nice though it was, seemed to bring her closer to Ted, rather than to have any great meaning of its own. It was awfully nice, naturally, to know Bud; nobody could help liking to hear "I love you," and he certainly kissed pleasantly. He had brains, too. But he made her want to write to Ted. She said very little in her note.

"I want to report progress" [she wrote]. "Mother and I had an awful battle a few nights ago, and I won a

complete victory. You'll be glad to know about it, I hope.

"Are you coming to New York soon? It's ages since I've seen you, and there's a lot of talk about. Bud Lane spoke of you. He's a nice boy, don't you think so? Let me know when you're coming.

As ever,

"ELLY."

She was addressing the envelope when the phone rang. She picked up the receiver.

"Is this Schuyler 9908?"

"Yes."

"I wish to speak to Miss Eleanor Hoffman."

"Speaking."

"This is Chester Adelstein."

"Oh, hello."

"How do you do. I said I would call back at seven, but I was engaged at the time."

"Oh, that's all right."

"Miss Hoffman, on the twenty-eighth of next month my fraternity is giving a dance at the Astor. Will you do me the honor of accompanying me?" Eleanor had difficulty suppressing a giggle. He talked just like a book of etiquette.

"Why, yes, I'd love to."

"That's settled. I'll tell you full details later. Meanwhile, I'd like to see you some evening. When could I come?"

"You can come tonight if you want to." A pause, eloquent.

"Well, I had an engagement, but I could break it."

"Oh, don't do that, we'll make it some other night."

"It was of no importance. I didn't want to keep it, anyway. What time shall I be up?"

"Any time."

"All right. Good-by."

"'By." Mrs. Hoffman, who had come into the room toward the last few words, stood watching her daughter.

"Eleanor Hoffman, did you just make a date for to-night?"

"Yop."

"Who with? I don't see how you get along in school, with all the gadding you do."

"Chester Adelstein." Mrs. Hoffman's eyes brightened. Chester Adelstein. That was more like it.

"Well, I'm glad to see that you can still manage to find one or two of your own kind to associate with."

Chester arrived about half an hour after his phone call. Elly opened the door for him.

"You got out of your other date very easily, didn't you?" she asked.

"Oh, yes, it was comparatively simple."

Mr. Hoffman had gone to a lodge meeting, so there was no time spent discussing politics. Mrs. Hoffman beamed upon the young man, and Muriel came in to say hello.

"Irving'll be here in a little while," she said. "Shall we make it a foursome? We were going out dancing."

"I'm kind of tired," Elly said. "I don't think I care to go out," she looked at Chester—"that is, unless you're anxious to."

"Oh no, I'd much prefer to remain at home and talk."

After Muriel and Irving had left Mrs. Hoffman discreetly withdrew.

She needed no hint this time. She was more than willing to leave them alone. She was altogether delighted at the presence of Chester Adelstein in her house. Not that he was any too good for her daughter. No man in the

world was that. But it would be something to mention to those women at the bridge game next week. They were only too glad to mention the fact that Eleanor had been seen with a Gentile.

"I'm glad you didn't want to go out," Chester said. "I can't stand girls who are always wanting to run around and go dancing and have money spent on them. If they don't go with me for myself alone I'd rather not have them go with me at all." Eleanor smiled.

"You know a great many girls, don't you?" she asked.

"Yes," he replied, "and you'd be surprised how few really worth while ones there are. Girls who are supposed to be nice, I mean. I can't imagine what's getting into girls' heads these days! They have the strangest ideas. I understand them, because I'm studying them all the time. I'm deeply interested in human nature. It's essential, I think, for a man who intends to be a good lawyer, especially a criminal lawyer, to be a thorough student of human nature. Don't you agree?"

"Oh, yes, of course." She smiled.

"Don't laugh at me!" he commanded sharply. "I don't want to sound conceited, but I really don't think you realize what a compliment I've paid you this evening. It's not many girls I would break a date for at the last minute."

"I appreciate that," she said. "It was very good of you."

"Now you're making fun of me. I won't have it. No girl can do that and get away with it."

"Look," Eleanor said, "one of the things I will not do is quarrel with my friends. I have enough scrapping that I can't avoid, right here at home, and I simply will not take on any more. I think you're an interesting person,

and I'd like to see more of you, but if it can't be done without scrapping, it won't be done at all."

"You're frank if nothing else."

"Yes. That's what I told you the other night, only you wouldn't believe me. I'm frank because it's the simplest way of accomplishing what I want. It's too much trouble for me to be any other way."

"Well, I'll say one thing," Chester answered, "you're one strange girl. I'm not sure whether I like you or not, but I will admit that you interest me. And darn few girls do that. I'm hard to interest. Anyway, will you come to the Beta Zeta dance with me?"

"Yes, I'd love to. I know quite a lot of your boys, I think. Most of your chapter. And I know some from out of town, too. Know Howard Isaacs?"

"Sure. He's Yale. Yes, we went to high school together."

"Oh, did you? That Yale chapter is nice."

"To tell you the truth, it's better than ours. They're getting too easy. Letting in too darn many kikes. It's bad enough, the number of them there are at Columbia, without having them in your fraternity. No wonder they're talking of limiting the Jews in colleges. It seems like a rough deal on the surface, but actually it's only to eliminate the undesirable element."

"I know, but how can you be so arbitrary about which is the undesirable element? I don't see how we can expect to do away with Jewish prejudice on the part of Gentiles if there's so much of it inside our own faith. Either you're a Jew or you're not, and I can't see what difference it makes whether your father's parents came from Russia or Germany, or stopped in England on the way over. It's only an accident, anyway."

"That's perfectly ridiculous. You know yourself there is a difference. Do you mean to say there's no difference between me and some little East Side kike tailor's son?"

"Not essentially. You're different on top. But the important point is that he's a Jew and so are you, and you'll never get the people outside to accept you the way you feel you should be accepted until you stop feeling superior to that little East Side tailor. I don't give a darn, myself. I mean, I'm not crusading for them, or anything like that, but I can't help laughing at you. It's just like my mother. She scolded me for years because I was very good friends with a boy whose folks came from Russia. Now she scolds me because I'm friends with some Gentiles."

"Why not? Why should you go outside your own class? Either below or a——." He stopped short. Eleanor laughed.

"My goodness," she said, "you weren't going to say above, were you?"

"Certainly not."

"You know, I've often thought that secretly, way down somewhere in their subconscious minds, Jews felt that way, that Gentiles were above them. That might be the very reason they're so touchy on the subject. You know, an inferiority complex, according to this Freudian theory that everyone is talking about so much."

"Bosh. I'm as good as any Gentile in New York."

"There! That's just it. Why should you feel it necessary to say that if you weren't unconvinced of it?"

"I don't care to discuss it any further."

"All right. It's too near quarreling, anyway."

"You call any little discussion a quarrel, don't you?"

"No."

"Well, anyway, you're a very remarkable girl. You're peculiar, all right, and you have some awfully wrong ideas in your head, but you are interesting."

"I don't bore you?"

"No. Not in the least. By the way, do you like to go to the theater?"

"Crazy about it."

"Couldn't we go some night next week? What would you like to see?"

"How about going to the Washington Square Players? I'm anxious to see this bill. I hear *Bushido*, that Japanese play, is wonderful. And the other things on this bill are good, too." Chester vetoed that idea.

"No, I don't think I'd care to go to that. Too much tragedy. I think there's enough unpleasantness in real life without going to the theater to see more. I've been wanting to see *Good Gracious Annabelle* ever since it opened. Now that's the type of play I like. A cute, clean little comedy. Not too deep. Would that suit you?"

"Sure. I like to see every kind of play. Some day I'll be doing theatrical work, and I want to see everything."

"What do you mean, you're going on the stage?"

"No," she laughed. "There are other things to do in the theater besides act. I want to design costumes and make posters."

"Oh. Well, then, I'll get seats for that. What night? Would Thursday be all right? I like to let my ticket man know a few days ahead. I hate to sit behind the fourth row."

"Yes, let's go Thursday." Chester looked at his watch.

"It's nearly eleven," he said. "I've a lot to do in the morning, so I think I'll be going." Eleanor rose. She was rather tired herself.

"It was very nice of you to break your date," she said, "and come here. I appreciate it, really. And I'm not making fun of you." Chester beamed.

"Well, I did want to see you, little girl. You interest me deeply. What do you say to having dinner together first, before we go to the show? Could you?"

"I think I'd be allowed to with you," she said, "although as a rule mother likes me home for meals."

"All right. That's a date. I'll call for you at six, and we can decide then where to go."

"Fine. Good night."

"Good night. I've had a most pleasant evening, Eleanor. I may call you Eleanor, mayn't I?"

"Of course." She smiled again as she closed the door after him. That stilted voice which he put on and took off on these occasions of greetings and good-bys seemed to her awfully funny. She wondered how he had come upon the notion. His mother must have trained him that way, she supposed. Yes, he had said his mother was a stickler for etiquette. But he acted as though it were something you measured by the yard. Oh, well, it was instructive, and she wanted to learn.

CHAPTER X

I

TED LEVINE answered Eleanor's letter almost immediately, with a short note saying he would not be down until the Christmas holidays, and hoped he could see her then. There were a great many things he wanted to talk to her about, he said. How was she getting on with Lane? He seemed to have quite a crush on her, Ted thought. He was a pretty good sort, not too bright, but pretty fair.

It was funny, how that letter, short and utterly impersonal, stayed with her. She was having a gay and stimulating time those autumn months with the crowd from school, and Bud Lane managed to get to New York rather frequently. Chester Adelstein, too, was always available, he called up regularly and took her to theaters and dances. She was quite happy. Her mother's annoyance at her intimacy with the people from school was considerably counterbalanced by her pleasure at the growing friendship with Chester. Maybe she would come to her senses after all. Mrs. Hoffman beamed upon Elly encouragingly whenever she spoke of Chester, and hinted clumsily at possible joys to come.

Still behind everything else in Eleanor's mind lurked the knowledge that Ted Levine was coming down Christmas week. She didn't think of it much consciously, but it was there, with her, all the time. It was ages since she had seen him. There would be endless things to talk about, to compare notes over. When she did think about it with her conscious mind it was with eagerness. Being with Ted had always been like being alone with herself.

She never had to explain anything to him. He just knew. And he didn't think she was queer or crazy, either. It would be nice for him to meet Eva and Roberta and the gang. He would fit in there quite easily, just as she had. She must arrange a party when he came.

The six weeks between the time she received the letter and the moment his telephone call came, were frightfully long, in spite of the fact that they were crowded with dates and parties. And although she had been invited to a rather good party the first evening of the Christmas holidays, she decided to stay at home. She couldn't have told why, exactly, if she had been asked. But she didn't want to go out that night. She was very quiet during dinner, and sat rather tense, in an attitude of expectant waiting. Once during dinner the telephone rang, and although ordinarily she waited until the maid answered, she leaped from her chair and flew down the long hall to the library. She picked up the receiver and spoke, waiting breathlessly through the eternity of a second before the answering voice came. It was Irving for Muriel. She breathed again, spoke to him rather shortly, and called her sister.

After dinner she went into the library to read, sitting within arm's reach of the phone. It rang several times during the course of the evening, but none of the times brought Ted. At eleven o'clock she went to bed, and resumed her reading. She was still awake when Muriel came back from a date with Irving. Muriel was in a confidential mood, and Eleanor listened with more interest than usual. It filled her mind for a time.

"Elly," Muriel said excitedly when she was sure her mother would not hear her, "we've decided to announce our engagement as soon as graduation is over. He'll be

taken right in his uncle's firm, and it won't be long before we can get married. You know, I always wanted to be married young. You won't mind if I get married ahead of you, will you?" She spoke a little wistfully, as though she were afraid of hurting her sister.

"Don't be silly," Elly said. "Why should I? Lord, I might never marry. Would that mean you could never marry either? The only thing is mother. You know how formal she is. She's going to be disappointed because I didn't do the correct thing and get there first. But she'll be glad about Irving. She always did like him, even when . . ." She stopped and looked at Muriel, who smiled a little uneasily.

"Even when you and he had a crush? Yes, I know. You don't care for him that way any more, do you?" she asked. "I asked him about that last year when he first started to rush me, and he said it had only been a kid affair. That's right, isn't it?"

"Certainly. It stopped ages ago, when I first began to go with Ted. He *would* keep getting into things. But I don't think Irving approves of me much any more, does he?" Muriel looked faintly embarrassed.

"Well," she said, "he thinks you have some awfully crazy ideas. But he likes you, and he says you're terribly clever. He thinks you're much cleverer than I am, as a matter of fact, but he prefers to be married to a girl who hasn't got such wild ideas. He thinks it's wonderful that you haven't influenced me more."

"Well, you must admit that I've never even tried to influence you."

"No, you really haven't. And you know I'm crazy about Irving, but I'll always feel just the same about you, and I'll never let him come between us." Her voice was

a little tremulous, a most unusual thing for Muriel. Eleanor patted her hand.

"You're a good kid," she said. "It's funny, isn't it, that we should have such different ideas and still be so close? Funny, and kind of nice. Look at us, we're getting all mushy." They both laughed a trifle self consciously. It was quite unlike them to express any of the really nice things that lay between them, and both were embarrassed a little. A shrill noise broke in upon their embarrassment. It was the telephone, sounding incredibly harsh and strident, coming so unexpectedly in the night.

"I wonder who that can be?" Muriel said. "Bet it's a wrong number. Mother'll have a fit if it wakes her up." But Eleanor did not stay to hear any more. In her bare feet and without even a bathrobe to protect her from the draught of the hall, she sped to the library. The shrill voice had clamored only twice when she picked up the receiver and breathed a faint hello into the mouthpiece. After a million years, Ted's voice came gayly:

"Elly?" Suddenly she was quite calm, quite casual, altogether matter-of-fact.

"Yes," she replied, "this is Elly. Why on earth did you call me at this ungodly hour? You've probably waked the whole family."

"You don't seem very glad to hear me."

"Certainly I'm glad, but it is awfully late to phone, you know."

"Yes, I do know, but I had to speak to you. Listen, if I come up for you now, can you get away? I'm with a fellow from school, and he's crazy to meet you. We're at Pennsylvania station and it would only take about twenty minutes to get up there in a cab. Come on, be a sport."

"I wish I could, but really, Ted, there isn't a chance in the world. I could never get out. Don't plague me with the idea, but make a date with me now for tomorrow or the next day. I do want to see you."

"All right. Tomorrow for lunch. Meet me at the Biltmore at one o'clock. Then we can talk all afternoon. All right?"

"Yes. That'll be fine. Got to hang up now. G'by."

"'By. I wish you could come out now."

"Good-by."

2

He was waiting for her when she reached the Biltmore lobby. That was nice. She'd more than half expected him to be late, he was such a careless person. But he was there, looking very handsome, and rather more neat than she had remembered him.

"Ted." She walked up almost under his very eyes before he saw her.

"Elly." He looked down at her. He was taller, too, than she had remembered. "You look lovely." She did. She wore a suit of blue velvet, the kind of warm, dusky blue of the sky just as it is turning dark. The collar and cuffs were of squirrel, and her reddish hair showed in little wings from under the sides of a squirrel turban. Her cheeks, usually so pale, were faintly flushed. She put her hand in his, and he wrung it.

"Ouch." They both laughed. "Well."

"Well. Let's get a table and order—I'm starved—and then we can talk. How's my Galatea?"

"Oh, you mustn't take too much credit." They found a table.

"I'll order," said Ted with rather a lordly air. "I know

just what you want.” She watched him, amused and admiring. How nice it was to be with him. A sort of homecoming.

The waiter left their food and went away.

“Begin,” said Ted. “Tell me everything. Are you in love with Lane? He is with you, you know.”

“Don’t be silly. Of course I’m not. I think he’s awfully nice, and lots of fun to be with, but I’m not in love with him. I haven’t even got a little crush. You know,” quite seriously, “I don’t think I’m capable of falling in love.”

“Don’t make me laugh.”

“Well, look, other girls my age are crazy about someone. Some of them are even engaged and married. Why, my sister is going to get engaged in the summer. And I’ve never even felt a flicker. Why, do you suppose?”

“Waiting for me.”

“Silly.”

“Well, I don’t know. It just happened, I guess. Like me. I’ve never really fallen for any girl. We’re too much concerned with ourselves, I guess.”

“I don’t really want to, either. When I was a kid, about fourteen or fifteen, I used to think that nothing would be so nice as that, but I’ve changed. I’ve got a fixed idea,—remember you said I should?—and that’s freedom. If I ever get that I’ll hang on to it so tight that it’ll never escape me, and I don’t want to think of anything else. A fixed idea really doesn’t give you much room for anything else.”

“No. By the way, you said you’d made some progress. Tell me about it.”

“It was about Bud Lane. You know how mother is—she didn’t want to let him come to see me because he was

a Gentile. But I was firm." And she recounted the whole affair, to his great edification.

"You are getting brave," he commended, "I can remember the time when you wouldn't have dared."

"So can I. But I'm so afraid of getting hemmed in that I'm less afraid of fighting. You know? School sort of opened a lot of doors to me, doors to places I never even knew existed, and now I see that they're the most everyday sort of places. But that's what I love. There's nothing queer or eccentric about the people I know. They're just human beings. Oh, Ted, I'm really awfully happy."

"Gosh, I wish I were."

"What's the matter?" There was real concern in her voice.

"I suppose it's crazy of me, but it's on my mind a lot."

"*What* is?"

"The war. I want to leave college and go over, join the American Ambulance Corps, or something. I don't know, I want to beat these other guys to it, 'cause we'll be getting into the war ourselves in a little while. You'll see."

"*Ted!*" sharply.

"Sure. These people who think the war's nearly over have another guess coming. It's got a good long time to run yet, and before it's over this country'll be well mixed up in it, too. I had a long talk with my father last night, and he agrees with me. And believe me, he knows, because he really studies the war."

"Does he know you want to go over?"

"Yop."

"What does he think about it?"

"Well, naturally, he isn't crazy about the idea, but he understands it perfectly. He's a good guy, my father. You know to this day there's a price on his head in Russia. He was a radical agitator and he only escaped by being

smuggled across the border in a load of hay. We're a very romantic family, even if our name is Levine."

Elly didn't answer. She was thinking about the war. Somehow, through all the two and a half years of its existence it had never really touched her until now. She'd read about the battles, she'd thrilled at the war plays, she'd contributed to drives, but always in a detached sort of way. It was something far beyond the confines of her life, something that could never possibly touch her. And now, suddenly, because one boy, sitting opposite her at the lunch table, spoke in a casual way of entering it, the whole thing rose up and engulfed her. In that moment it changed from an utterly impersonal business to a thing that was painfully her own affair. Yet it was exactly the same war as it had been five minutes before.

"You can't really go," she said. "It would kill your mother."

"Um," said Ted, "that's the only thing. Still, if she were convinced that America would get in I think she'd just as soon let me go right away. Oh, well, I won't do it for a couple of weeks, anyway. Hey, why don't you eat your salad?"

"I can't. I'm not hungry, really." She couldn't eat, now. She felt as though food would choke her.

"What'll we do after lunch?" he asked her. "Want to go to the movies or something?"

"All right, let's go to one and sit in the back so we can talk."

They found a little movie house on Seventh Avenue, near Forty-second Street, and sat in the last row, with empty seats all around them. The place was almost deserted; there was just a sprinkling of people scattered about, mostly men.

They came in during the news reel, which consisted largely of war pictures. There was a close-up of some French soldiers being decorated for bravery. The sprinkling of men applauded. Elly shuddered.

"Oh, Ted."

"What?"

"I don't want you to go." She said it very low. He took hold of her hand, and patted it.

"Nice kid."

"Don't." She didn't want to be called a nice kid. She wanted him to say he wouldn't go. She wanted to put away the image of the war as a personal monster, and get back the vague, impersonal picture she'd always had. If he said he wouldn't go that would happen. Not otherwise. She didn't know why it should make so much difference to her, she hardly ever saw him, anyway. But it did. Suddenly she was crying. The film got all blurred before her eyes, and her throat ached.

"I want to go away from here," she said, making her voice steady. "Come on, let's walk on Fifth Avenue for a while, and then take the bus up to my house."

"All right." They went. The day outside was very cold and brilliant, filled with a kind of hard, penetrating sunshine. They walked briskly east to Fifth Avenue, and then north.

"Am I all funny?" Elly asked, looking up at him.

"You seem pretty good to me." He took her arm with a kind of proprietary air, and bent toward her as they walked. At Fifty-seventh Street they caught a bus and in less than half an hour they were in Elly's library.

Mrs. Hoffman was out playing bridge. Muriel had a date, too, so there was nearly a whole afternoon for them, quite undisturbed. They sat in the library. For a long

time it seemed, they were quite still. Then Ted got up from his chair and came over to where Elly was sitting.

"I didn't know it would hit you this way," he said, lifting up her hand and kissing it, "or I wouldn't have told you." She smiled.

"I didn't know anything could hit me this way," she answered. "But it's kind of sudden, you know, and it makes me think of a lot of things I never thought of before." He sat on the arm of her chair and took her face between both his hands.

"Does it make you think of me differently?" She nodded, mutely, and tears came into her eyes.

"Don't cry dear . . . dearest . . . don't . . . please." He took his handkerchief and began to wipe the tears away, but they kept on coming.

He slid from the chair arm to a kneeling position beside her, his face on a level with hers. He looked at her solemnly with his large dark eyes.

"You love me, don't you?" he said, wonderingly.

"I guess so," through more tears.

"And you just found it out when I said I was going away, didn't you?"

"Yes. Oh," she clutched his arm, "don't go."

"Darling." He kissed her. It was a long kiss, very tender and soft.

"Promise me you won't go? Anyway, not until we get in—if you really think we will."

"Well, maybe I won't. Father thinks it would be a good idea for me to wait and get my degree, as long as I'm so nearly through. I was kind of undecided, but now, with you, that makes a difference, of course." He kissed her again.

"Do you love me?" She nodded.

"How funny you are, darling. Only three hours ago you were telling me you could never fall in love with anybody."

"That's nothing. So were you. Do you suppose we've always been like this and didn't have sense enough to know it?"

"I guess so. Kiss me!"

"What else have I been doing for the last fifteen minutes?"

"You've been letting me kiss you, which is something altogether different. I want you to kiss me."

"All right, master." She stood up, and planted a kiss on his forehead. "There you are."

"No, none of that. Right here," touching his mouth with his fingers. "There, that's better," when she had obeyed him.

"Mother'll be home in a little while," she said, regretfully, "we'd better be ready for her. You know she's never forgiven you for being alive. She still holds you accountable for most of my sins—you and John Lyman Carver. Gosh, how she hates that man. It's funny, too, neither you nor he had half the influence on me that Samuel Butler has had."

"You're just hypnotized by that book, aren't you?"

"Yop. When I think of that book I can understand perfectly how religious people feel about the Bible. It is my Bible. Whenever I get mixed up on anything I read part of it, and it always sets me right."

"I never could get excited over it. I know it's supposed to be the father of all modern novels, but it's too discursive for me. I like the French style better, where it's straight narrative, like in *Cousin Betty*, f'rinstance. Oh, I read a swell book last week, *The Emperor of*

Portugalia. It's one of those straight-away sort of books."

"Who's it by?"

"A woman. Selma Lagerlof. She's Swedish, I think."

"I must get it from the library. I don't care for those so much, though. I like 'em when they begin with the grandfather of her hero, and work down to his own grandchildren. I like English writers best of all."

"I like French. If you had to choose your favorite book, beside *The Way of All Flesh*, I mean, what would you say?"

"That's hard to answer offhand. I switch about so much. Every time I read something I have to readjust my list. In high school I belonged to the literary club, and for one whole term we read the plays of Maeterlinck. Then I thought he was the greatest writer in the world. I thought *Monna Vanna* was the most wonderful thing ever written. But the next term we read Ibsen, and then I got an awful crush on *A Doll's House*. I'm not so crazy about that now. My two favorite plays are *The Gay Lord Quex*—gee, I wish they'd play that here some time,—and *Cæsar and Cleopatra*."

"You mean 'Antony and Cleopatra,' don't you?"

"I *do not*. I'm talking about Shaw not Shakespeare. If you haven't read that, you haven't read anything. It's wonderful. The most marvelous Cleopatra. Only sixteen years old and very naïve. And Cæsar awfully funny and sophisticated. John Drew would be a marvelous Cæsar."

"Aw, you're crazy."

"No, I'm not. I'll lend you the book, and I bet you'll agree with me."

"All right, let me take it back to school with me."

"Listen!" Heavy footsteps were coming down the outside hall. "Here comes mother." Ted jumped from the chair arm where he had been sitting, and picked up a magazine. He was sitting decorously on the couch, glancing through the magazine when Mrs. Hoffman came in. She greeted him rather curtly, and with considerable surprise. She had not known that Eleanor had an engagement with him, in fact, she had been unaware that he was in New York. However, here he was in her house, and it was close to dinner time.

"Will you stay for supper?" she asked without cordiality. Ted smiled.

"No, thank you," he said, "I can't. I'm expected at my aunt's at six thirty. You know," he went on, turning to Elly, "Aunt Sarah. She lives on a hundred and seventy-sixth street. I'll stay a little while longer if I may, I don't want to get there until the last minute."

"Oh, yes," Mrs. Hoffman said. "We don't eat until seven on Saturdays. Mr. Hoffman always plays poker at the club Saturday afternoons." She turned to go. "Excuse me," she said, "I must go inside to look after the dinner."

They stood looking at each other, smiling.

"I feel like an awful dog," Elly said, "always laughing at mother. But she is funny, isn't she? Oh, that reminds me, why did you tell Bud Lane I had no sense of humor?"

"Well, you haven't, about yourself. You can't have. You shouldn't have. It would get frightfully in the way, and probably prevent you from accomplishing the thing you want. Instead of going ahead doggedly you'd stop every once in a while and laugh at yourself, and that would mean a distinct retrogression. I think people

talk too much about a sense of humor, anyway. And, believe me, the people who're so sure they have one are usually absolutely minus. And, anyway, they usually mix up a sense of humor with a sense of fun. That's what you've got—a sense of fun. It's one of the things I've always liked about you. We think the same things are funny. I think that's a very good foundation for a happy marriage, don't you?"

"What has that got to do with it?"

"Don't be coy, for the love of Pete. Remember, once when we were kids I said you'd probably marry me in the end. Well, you will. Of course not right away, but you know, as soon as I'm out of college I'll go into my father's business. And he likes you, Elly. He thinks you're great. So he'll give me a fairly decent salary, and then we'll get married. You want to, don't you?"

"I guess so, but not for a long time. I wouldn't want to until I was all straight with myself. But it'll be fun to think about it, anyway. You wouldn't want me to stop seeing the other boys, would you?"

"No, silly. I'm not like that. I know you love me, and that's all that counts. Will you write to me every week?"

"Yes, will you?"

"Yop. And, believe me, nothing could prove my love any better than that. I hate to write."

"I've noticed that."

"Fresh!" He kissed her.

"Look out. Mother has terribly keen ears. Especially for things like this." His answer was to kiss her again.

"Here she comes now. Be careful, please! You don't want to spoil everything, do you?"

By the time Mrs. Hoffman had traversed the distance from the kitchen to the library, Ted was in his overcoat, and putting on his gloves.

"It's time for me to start, Elly," he was saying, "I'll call you tomorrow. Good-by."

"So long. It was very nice to see you." Their eyes glinted as they bade each other a formal good-by. Mrs. Hoffman, satisfied, apparently, that all was well, said good-night and went back to the kitchen. They managed to get in one more kiss before the door shut him out.

Eleanor, left alone, was thoughtful. A part of her was exceedingly calm, now that she knew the real reason why she'd always grown so excited over Ted. How funny of her not to have recognized it. Another part was even more excited than usual. He was wonderful. So kind of thrilling. He mustn't go away to war. She couldn't bear it. Even though she wouldn't see him an awful lot during the next few months while he was at college, it wasn't the same thing as being in the fighting. And as long as America wasn't in it, why should he go? Well, he'd half promised not to.

It was nice, this feeling. But one thought came cropping up, which prevented her giving herself up to it altogether. What had happened to her resolve not to get in love with anyone? And how would being in love with Ted affect her struggle for freedom? There was something about this thing she wanted—this spiritual integrity—which resented her feeling for Ted. Wouldn't being in love interfere somehow with belonging to herself? It did complicate matters somewhat. Or, at least, it

would with anyone but Ted. After all, it was Ted who had helped her start to work toward the freedom. The telephone cut in on her ruminations. It was Ted.

"Hello. Elly? Can I come back after dinner? I have so much I want to talk to you about."

"All right. I'll get the devil, but come anyway."

" 'By."

"El—ly," came her mother's voice. "Come in and help me set the table. Katie has to go to the store. She forgot to get bread this morning."

"Are you going out tonight?" Mrs. Hoffman asked, as they spread the tablecloth.

"I don't know. Ted's coming back later. We may go out. Do you know, he says he's sure this country'll be in the war within a year."

"A lot he knows."

"Oh, but he really does know a lot about that. He even thought of going over and joining the ambulance corps or something."

"That's just like him. Always wanting to do something eccentric. Never a thought for his poor mother. How do you suppose she would feel if her only son went over to fight in a war that had absolutely nothing to do with him? Not a bit of consideration. He's a fine influence for a girl like you, I don't think. You're not selfish and inconsiderate enough already, you have to associate with a fellow like that."

Nevertheless, he did come back. That was the way it usually happened. Mrs. Hoffman would hold forth and orate, and assert her divine authority, and the girls would go right ahead with whatever project they had in mind. In their childhood, of course, her physical superiority had been able to triumph for her, but ever since

they were grown it availed her little. Still, she seemed happy enough if she could just talk on.

He came, and he stayed until after midnight. When he went, reluctantly, he had given Eleanor his promise not to go to war, unless America should enter it.

They managed to see each other some time every day for the rest of the vacation. It was a delirious week for Eleanor, delirious and uneven. She was frightfully happy a great part of the time, and Ted was adorable, but there were moments when she felt quite sunk in a vague, incomprehensible despair. At night, after she was in bed, she would take from the back of her head all the thoughts and impressions she had stored there during the day, and go over them, one by one. A word he had said, a glance he had given her, something funny they had giggled over, a kiss he had snatched right on the street, as they had turned a corner, and no one was looking. A horde of precious little things, meaning nothing, really, yet meaning everything. But always this incomprehensible something acting as a sort of check-rein on her happiness.

When he left for school again on Sunday night, Elly went to the train with him. They had been together all afternoon and evening, and now it was time to say good-by.

"Write to me?" Ted squeezed her hand very tight.

"Yes. Ouch, you're hurting me. My ring digs."

"A lot?"

"Yes, will you?"

"I'll try. But anyway I'll be thinking about you all the time."

"And you positively will not go to war?"

"No, pesty, I told you I wouldn't. But it won't be long before we'll all be going."

"Oh shut up, why ruin our last few minutes?" The train caller yelled something which sounded like "all aboard." Ted picked up his bag.

"Good-by, little nut," he said in a gay voice. Then very low, although still casually, "I love you, really."

"Me, too," she said. "Good-by." They shook hands quite matter-of-factly, and Ted walked through the gate. Elly turned and walked to the subway. In twenty minutes she was at home.

"Where've you been?" her mother asked her.

"Down to the station with Ted. He went back to-night."

"Thank God for that. I don't know what you can see in that fellow. You are without doubt the most perverse girl in the whole world. Every other nice Jewish girl in New York would give her right eye for a fellow like Chester Adelstein, and you, who can have him, treat him like the dirt under your feet and take up with a little socialist kike. Tell me one thing, is there anything serious in this business?"

"What do you mean, serious?"

"You know perfectly well what I mean. I don't want you to get any ideas into your head about marrying this boy. If you have no sense yourself, at least have some consideration for the rest of your family. It would make it very uncomfortable for Muriel if they found out you were running around with that type of person."

"Well, as I've told you before, I intend to keep right on choosing my friends for myself. The Housemans will have to stand it. I'll tell you what, if you feel that I'm such a burden and a disgrace to the family I can move away. I might arrange with father to give me grandma's

money, and I'm sure I could get some part time work to do."

Mrs. Hoffman leaped upon the words, almost before they were out.

"That's right, that's right," she said. "You want to get away from home. I might have expected it. That's what I get for letting you go to art school. I knew why I didn't want you to go, all right. Getting these Bohemian ideas. Leaving home. Do you want to kill your own mother?"

"No, but I seem to be such a nuisance, I just thought if I got out of the way. . . ."

"You're only talking that way to aggravate me. But you'll be sorry some day, when it's too late. Just you wait and see." Eleanor sighed, and left the room.

3

It was planned that the engagement would be announced in June, after Irving's graduation from law school. The Housemans altogether approved of Muriel, and they believed in early marriages. They had been married when Mrs. Houseman was seventeen and her husband only twenty. And was there a happier couple in the city of New York? They were glad their son was willing to marry and settle down without sowing wild oats so many boys thought they had to before they could call themselves men of the world.

Mr. and Mrs. Hoffman were extremely pleased about Irving. They had known him for years, ever since he first came to the house to see Elly when they went to Sunday School together. He was a nice sensible boy, clever, upright, honorable. There was no nonsense about him, and while you couldn't exactly call the Houseman

family a wealthy one, there was no doubt about the fact that he could take care of Muriel in the manner to which she was accustomed. A little better, maybe.

So the days went by a great deal more placidly than usual. Nothing much happened. Muriel collected underwear and linens, which were stored on the top of a closet. Eleanor stayed away for dinner about twice a week. Even that didn't create quite the sensation it would have at some other time. There was a fuss the first time she called up and said she wouldn't be home for dinner, but not so lusty a fuss as she had expected. The second time it was easier and after a while she managed to phone at times when her mother was out.

It was funny about Ted. She thought about him a great deal, and wrote quite often. She was altogether sure of the way she felt about him, but she couldn't honestly say she felt any great longing to see him. As long as she kept in touch with him and knew he was all right, and wasn't going away to war, everything was all right. She still enjoyed being with Bud Lane when he came to town for week ends, and she still got the same mixture of amusement and irritation from her contacts with Chester Adelstein. But the school crowd—that is, the gang she'd met at Eva's that night which now seemed so long ago, occupied more of her time and attention than anything else. They never did anything but sit around and talk. They had a pet coffee house near the school where they'd have dinner several times a week. It was nothing at all, really; it differed in no way from hundreds of similar groups of boys and girls in schools and colleges all over who like to sit and drink coffee and settle the problems of the universe. But to Eleanor it was a never-ceasing marvel.

CHAPTER XI

I

IT happened a little after three o'clock in the morning, on the sixth of April. Of course, everybody knew by that time that war was virtually declared. They had known it, as a matter of fact, ever since von Bernsdorff's dismissal, although it wasn't a literal declaration. Then on the second of April came the President's message to Congress, asking for war, followed on the fifth day by the Senate's affirmative vote. So, really, the actual declaration, when it finally came, was in the nature of an anticlimax. But, nevertheless, there was something strangely exciting about the exact moment.

The gang had gathered at Eva's, and Hank had promised to call them the very instant the flash came from Washington.

"We'll wait," they had decided, "even if it means staying up all night." With that possibility in mind Elly had arranged to sleep at the apartment. That, of course, had not been accomplished without its difficulties, but it was easier than it would have been six months before. Elly was making progress. The fussing and bickering had not precisely subsided, but it seemed to be more perfunctory now, and done as a sort of automatic process, without a great deal of hope. Something like the way a lawyer makes formal objection on general principles to as many as possible of his opponent's questions.

And now they were waiting, quietly and gravely, nobody saying very much, everyone breathing a little faster

than usual. The evening had been different from any of their other evenings. Nobody had been terribly gay, and even Roberta had been subdued. They had talked mostly of what they were going to do. It was easy for the boys. They were eager and proud, and filled with plans that called for immediate action. They didn't know exactly what they'd do, but it would be something that got them to the front right away. The girls were different. They wanted to do important things, too, but Eva, always practical, rather took the romance out of it for them.

"There's no use getting all excited at the prospect of healing fevered brows and marrying wounded officers," she said. "This is a real war, not a movie, and I'll bet you they won't let any woman overseas who isn't an expert in whatever line she's needed for. The thing for us to do is stay calm and wait for developments. We'll probably be needed right here for a million things."

"Eve's so damn sensible," Bobbie grumbled. "Sometimes I wonder how I can bear living with her. I want to go overseas. I'd look so well in a nurse's uniform."

"That's right," Eva laughed, "but you faint at the sight of blood. You'd be a great help on a battlefield."

"Hoho." Now it was Bobbie's turn to laugh. "Shows how much you know. There aren't any battlefields in this war. It's all trenches."

"Stop squabbling, will you? This is the greatest occasion in the history of the world, and you sit around and fight." This from Billy Tracy, who was nervously chewing his nails. "God, I wish that phone would ring." The girls subsided. Everybody drank great quantities of coffee and smoked hundreds of cigarettes. Elly sat in the corner with a book. She didn't want to talk, and the fidgety silence upset her. She wasn't reading, really,

although she made an effort to concentrate upon one of the *Affairs of Anatol*. She was thinking of Ted, remembering the day they had lunched together, and how the specter of war had shown her what he really meant to her. Strange, she was much less frightened at the prospect of his going to war now than she had been then. Maybe it was because now it was his own country, and everybody else would be going, too. Somehow it didn't seem quite so much like a great monster reaching out and grinding this one boy between its gigantic jaws. Still, it was a dreadful thought.

It was eighteen minutes after three when the phone rang. At the sound a horrible sick thrill shuddered through Elly. The moment. Hank could stay on the wire only a second.

✓ "It's all over," he said to Eva. "Only fifty voted against it. Of course, Miss Rankin did, and of course she had to sob. Still that makes a good story. We'll run it under a divisional head. 'By, I've got to get busy."

"If the world were coming to an end," said Eva, turning from the phone, "all Hank would say is 'I hope it breaks for the morning papers.' Well, now that's over. You'd better go, boys, we're awfully tired." Tom Berry got up, holding his coffee cup aloft, and spoke, very solemnly.

"Listen, people," he said, "this is a big moment for us. I don't know just how long it will be before we're all scattered, but it'll be pretty soon. Let's promise, no matter what happens, that we'll get together again the minute the show is over. And let's all do everything we can to get the show over as soon as possible. I'm going to join up in the morning." He sat down again. Nobody

answered for a moment. They all felt tearful and excited and choky, and full of high resolves.

"That's a good idea," said Eva in a shaky voice. "The minute the war is over, and we're all back in New York again, we'll have a party here." She stopped. It was easy to see by their faces that they were all thinking the same thing. *If* they were all there when the war was over. Well, that was a natural enough thought, and they were all a bit unstrung.

Sleep was impossible, so getting into bathrobes and slippers after the crowd left, the three girls stayed up, Eva busying herself with clearing away the remains of the party, while Elly and Bobbie lounged comfortably and lazily on the couch. For several minutes nobody spoke. Each was busy with her own thoughts. Bobbie finally broke the silence."

"I wonder," she said, "what we'll be doing a year from to-night? Do you suppose it will be over by then?"

"I don't think so," Elly said. "I know someone who knows a lot about it, and he says it will take a long time. A year from to-night! It doesn't matter so much what we'll be doing. Where will the boys be, and will they all be left by that time?"

"You know," put in Eva from the kitchenette, "I can't seem to get any sense of reality from this. I can't grasp it. We've lived in the shadow of it for so long, now that it's here I'm not quite convinced."

"You'll be convinced soon enough," Bobbie told her. "Wait till the boys go away." Eva came back into the room and sat down in the big chair.

"I wonder," she said speculatively, "what Paul will do. He'll want to get right over."

"Oh, sure," Bobbie agreed. "Paul loves excitement."

"Who is Paul?" Elly inquired.

"Paul," said Eva gravely, "is Bobbie's cousin once removed, and my husband."

"Also once removed," added Bobbie.

"Your husband!" Elly gasped. "I never dreamed you had one."

"Well, I haven't got him any more, but I did have for several years. Until last summer, in fact."

"You mean you're divorced?"

"Yes. Does that shock you? It's done, you know!"

"Of course it doesn't shock me, but it is a surprise. You never gave me the slightest inkling that you'd been married. It explains lots of things to me, though. I always wondered how you could know so much—just about things in general, you know—but that accounts for it. How long were you married?"

"Five years. I was nineteen when I got married and twenty-four when I got my divorce."

"She didn't work at it that long, though," Bobbie contributed. "It really only lasted about three years, didn't it, Eve?" Eva nodded in assent.

"That's all," she said, "and I was ready to call it a lifetime even before then."

"Were you very unhappy?" Elly asked softly, her eyes growing wider and never moving off Eva's face.

"Aren't you a sentimental little goose!" Eva laughed. "No, I wasn't unhappy. That is, not acutely, or for any specific reason. Paul didn't beat me, and he wasn't even unfaithful—much. Anyway, I didn't care about that. It was simply a case of the well known incompatibility. We grew up together, practically, the families were friends, we knew all the same people, belonged to the same clubs, and all that. We were kid sweethearts, too,

and as soon as Paul got out of college we were married. There seemed to be no reason why we shouldn't, and we didn't know then that we didn't really love each other. It was pretty good for about a year. Parties, and lots of things to do, and the excitement of a new experience. And of course there was the physical part of it. That carried us over for quite a while. The attraction was quite violent for the first few months, and even for some time after it was enough to keep me interested. But it wasn't powerful or deep-rooted enough to last after I began to get bored with the man as a person. I tried to keep on because I hated to admit, even to myself, that I had made a mistake. But it got worse and worse. Just tiresome, you know. We didn't quarrel. We simply didn't have anything to say to each other. It dragged along for three years and then I went to Europe with the family. When I came back we decided to get a divorce, and we did. It was all very simple. Paul and I are perfectly good friends. We have occasional dates together."

"Yes," Bobbie laughed, "He's the only man she can have a date with and be sure he won't try to kiss her before the evening's over."

Eleanor was silent. She sat regarding Eva with an amusing mixture of astonishment, wonder and sudden comprehension. A dozen questions rose to her lips, but she managed to refrain from asking any of them. She opened her mouth to say something, then decided not to and closed it again.

"You look just like a goldfish when you do that," Bobbie told her. "What were you going to say?"

"I don't know," Elly answered. "About a million things at once."

"Well, fire away," Eva said. "All questions cheerfully answered."

"Are you sure you don't mind?" Elly asked. "Sure you don't think I'm intruding on your private affairs?"

"Don't be silly. I spoke of it myself, didn't I? As a matter of fact, I have no feeling that it's any particular private concern of mine. My feeling about the whole thing is purely impersonal. I can talk about it just as though it were somebody else's life I was discussing. What would you like to know?"

"Well, for instance, now that you're alone again, how do you feel? Don't you ever miss being married? Really being married, I mean."

"Lord, no. Far from it. On the contrary, I might have even continued being married if it hadn't meant really being married. That business, my dear Eleanor, I must regretfully inform you, is a vastly overrated pastime. For me, at any rate, and so far as I can observe, for a great many women. Only, unfortunately, that's one of the things you have to find out for yourself. Most women have to, I mean. It's like a college degree, or making a good fraternity. You don't know how unimportant it is until you've accomplished it, and then often it's too late to help you any."

"I'm glad you feel that way about it," Eleanor said. "I sort of had that idea, but I never got a chance to check up on it with anyone who really knew. Of course, some of the girls I used to go with are married now, but I don't see them much, and, anyway, it would be hard to talk to them about it, well, academically. They'd either say it was too sacred to discuss or they'd get to telling dirty stories."

"Well," Eva went on, "I can sum up my attitude toward

sex in a single sentence. I feel about it exactly the way some people feel about liquor. I can take it or leave it alone, and I'd rather leave it alone. It really complicates things so terribly. Of course there are a few women who are very highly sexed, and they probably have a deep need for it, the same as most men. But they are in the great minority, I'm sure. For most women sex is just an unavoidable part of marriage, something they put up with because it's in the bargain. They want a home and someone to support them, or they want children, or they just want the knowledge that they are married, and that's something that goes with it. Of course I haven't taken a census of all the women in the world, but I do know a lot of married women, and with a few exceptions that's about the way they feel. And I don't mean, either, that they absolutely hate it, that it's repulsive to them. It's just something they could easily get along without."

"Well, then," Elly pursued, "how about all the girls who do, without being married? How do you explain them?"

"That's not so hard. If you leave out the ones who are seduced by villains—and that's not many—and the ones who are in it professionally, I should say the large majority of those who remain do it because they're curious. It's a mysterious subject, and they want to find out what it's all about. Married women league together and speak mysteriously about this thing that they're in on and these other girls are not. That's what makes a lot of them try it. Of course, again, there are some girls who are really passionate by nature, who are simply overwhelmed by their emotions, who need fulfillment that way. But I don't think they make up a tenth of the girls who live with men. There's another explanation, too. Lots of

girls love men who can't marry them, or who don't want to, and although they don't feel any overwhelming passion for the men, they give themselves because that's the most convincing way of showing their love. Oh, there are dozens of reasons."

"You've omitted one big one," put in Bobbie. "An awful lot of girls trap themselves into it because they get a man started and then don't know how to stop him. That's where I'm good. I don't want to boast, but just as my contribution to this little clinical discussion allow me to state that I've been nearer the edge and still not gone over, than any girl I've ever heard of. I've been in situations that I could sell to the movies for a million dollars, and still managed to retain my technical virtue. I don't know why I bother, either, because it isn't worth a thing to me. Only I get quite a lot of fun out of playing a game with myself. I enjoy the danger, I like to put myself in a precarious position and then see what happens. And it isn't really hard to defend your alleged honor if you're just a little bit clever. I usually throw myself on their mercy, and it practically always works. Men love to be magnanimous. I've extricated myself from some pretty darn tight places by the simple expedient of appealing to the man's vanity. Another thing, most men won't be the first. If you can just keep 'em remembering you're a virgin, you're safe, no matter where you go or what you let them do. Don't you think so, Eva?"

"Oh, yes. And the funny part of it is they think that's very noble of them. They go around striking attitudes and saying how they wouldn't dream of seducing a virgin. But, really, all that their nobility amounts to is fear. They don't want the responsibility. It's so much safer for them if the girl's been there before."

"Well," said Elly, "they can't all be that way, because look at all the girls who aren't virgins. *Somebody* has to start them. There has to be a first time once."

"That seems logical enough," laughed Bobbie. "But you'll notice it's never the men you know who do it. It's always some other fellow, some boulder of their acquaintance. Men are awful fools!"

"Not to make a pun or anything, Bobbie," Eva said, "but aren't you riding for a fall? You won't be able to get away with that forever. Some time or other you'll meet a man who isn't quite such a fool."

"Probably you're right. But you've been telling me that for the last five years and I haven't met him yet. Anyway, if I do meet a man who's smarter than I am in that respect, more power to him. He's perfectly welcome to my virtue. Virtue is a state of mind, anyhow, and I don't feel any more virtuous now because I've managed by hook or crook to keep my virginity intact, than if I hadn't. As a matter of fact, I'm probably a lot lower than the girls who'll go the whole way. They're more honest."

"Yes," said Eva, "strictly speaking, you're a cheat."

"No, I'm not," Bobbie answered. "I never make them think I'm going to and then at the end refuse. I tell 'em right at the beginning what to expect. If they want to play my way, all right. If not, we don't play."

"And"—here Elly interrupted, her voice a little eager—"of course they always say they'll play your way, because in the back of each one's head is the idea that he'll be able to outplay you. You know, 'you're just a smouldering volcano, little girl. Some day you'll meet the right man.'"

"You get it, too," Bobbie chuckled.

“Doesn’t everybody?” Elly asked, not waiting for an answer. “Really, Eve,” she went on, “I don’t think Bobbie is a cheat. If you establish a few rules before you start it’s perfectly fair. After all, what does it amount to? The man wants one thing and you want something else. You’re going to try to get what you want without letting him get what he wants, and he’s going to get what he wants if he can. It seems to me that you’re playing just about as fair as he is, anyway. As long as you don’t take a high moral tone about the girls who do, I think it’s all right not to. Now, if Bobbie boasted about her virtuous character, and condemned the kind of girl who’s willing to go the whole way, then I’d call her a cheat. But she says she doesn’t consider herself any better than they are—a little worse, in fact. What could be fairer than that? Personally, I don’t agree with her about being worse. I think we’re all about the same. It’s all relative. Some girls don’t let men kiss them or touch them until they’re engaged. I think that’s silly. I enjoy being kissed and made love to in a mild sort of way. If I liked it a little more hectic, like Bobbie, I’d have it that way. But I don’t consider myself morally superior to Bobbie because she experiments a little more than I do, and she doesn’t consider herself morally superior to the girls who conclude the experiment. We’re all doing about what we like, getting the thing we want from life, or trying to. And that’s the most honest thing anyone can do.”

“Well, well, harken to the little philosopher,” Bobbie said, laughing indulgently. “You know, really, Eleanor, you get away with murder. Eve and I go around thinking that you are a little innocent, unworldly thing, in dire need of our protection. And then every once in a while you

say something that reveals a streak of instinctive knowledge and hardness in you. It's that look around the eyes, and your hesitating manner that fools people. Don't lose it. It's a great asset."

"I'll try not to."

The clock struck five.

"Let's conclude the performance for the present," suggested Eva. "We really must get some rest. Tomorrow'll be a hard day."

Elly slept on the couch, or rather, she tried to. For another hour she turned and tossed and kicked up the covers. Finally she fell asleep, just as dawn came through the windows. In spite of that she was up again in time to go to school with Eva and Bobbie. School, of course, was in a state of great excitement. The boys were more or less clannish, grouping together in knots and deciding what they would do. The whole atmosphere of the city was one of wild excitement. Flags were flying everywhere, people were talking excitedly on the streets, recruiting stations were opened at once, posters appeared as if from nowhere. In one day the whole world they knew had changed. They were all a little mad.

2

In less than a week it was as if there had never been any other state of affairs. How quickly you got used to things. Here she was, thinking about everything in terms of America-in-the-war, while a short time ago, with the thing imminent, she never gave it any consideration.

She heard from Ted. He was coming right down, he wrote in a hasty note, and would join up within a week. He wanted to be sure to get in an outfit that would go right over. She felt awfully proud of him, while she

worried. She went to the station to meet him, kissed him unashamedly when he alighted from the train, and plunged right into his plans. They were forming an officers' training corps at school, he said, and he had a chance to get into that, but he thought he'd rather get in one of the regular camps, because he had a hunch the college corps would be a long time getting overseas.

It was only a few days before he was off to camp. Fort Meyer, Virginia, was the training camp they sent him to. It was pretty good, he wrote the second day, but it looked as though there'd be mighty little time to write even notes, they were kept so busy.

"I have to save up minutes here and there during the day," he said, "so I can manage to work in a shave. I'll bet the soldiers in the trenches don't work as hard as we do. But there's one satisfaction. We're going to be put through double-quick, and that means getting over."

That was the only thing the boys spoke of those days—how soon they could get over. The ones who really wanted to chafed at every delay, and the ones who didn't really want to, spoke of it even more. By June practically every boy that Eleanor knew was in a uniform of some sort. Most of the boys from school were in officers' training camps. Bud Lane, who wanted action, said little and joined the Marines. He was the first of the lot to go overseas. Chester Adelstein was commissioned a first lieutenant in the Advocate General's Department and was stationed at 39 Whitehall Street. He wore the smartest of uniforms, and the most expensive boots.

He did look nice in his uniform, Eleanor admitted, and she felt rather pleased to be seen with him. People looked at him admiringly on the street and in restaurants. There

was a thrill in just being with any boy in a uniform those days.

Ted, meanwhile, slaved away at Fort Meyer. One day a telegram came announcing that he had won his commission and would be home on leave in two days. Eleanor called up the Army Building breaking a date to go dancing with Chester. He was simply blotted out of the picture as soon as she knew about Ted.

She fairly leaped to meet him as he stepped off the train. He looked wonderful, with the gleaming gold bar on his shoulder and the newly erect carriage. They walked across the Pennsylvania terminal lobby together, and every time a private saluted him she beamed with delight. It was wonderful, this war, and jolly. It gave an added fillip of joy of life. All the danger and ominousness seemed to be gone.

It wasn't long before Elly found her own niche. Just as Eva had predicted, there was no call for untrained women to go overseas. And, besides, Elly was too young by seven years. Twenty-five was the age set for foreign service. With Bobbie Burton, who burned to get to France, she made the rounds of the Red Cross, Y. W. C. A., even the Salvation Army, for a chance, but in vain. After a while they gave it up. Bobbie joined the Motor Corps and looked just as stunning in the handsome uniform of that organization as she would have in the blue and white of a nurse. Elly had to content herself with helping around the War Camp Community Service, doing a variety of odd jobs. Sometimes she was put on duty in the little information booths that were scattered all over the city, other times she served as a guide in the sight-seeing buses in which soldiers and sailors were taken on tours of New York. Now and then she was stationed

at a canteen. It was all very jolly, and didn't interfere much with school. She arranged her classes so she had two full mornings a week free and nearly every afternoon after two-thirty. The only drawback was that she didn't rate a regular uniform. All she got was a blue armband, with the W. C. C. S. insignia on it. But she bought a very plain dark blue serge suit and a severe sailor hat, which gave her a sort of uniformed appearance. And she looked very nice, too. It was awfully interesting, and gave her lots to write to Ted and Bud about. Bud was seeing action and seemed from his occasional letters to be enjoying it tremendously. He spoke of the fighting very casually, and dwelt more upon the fun he had while on leave. His letters only served to heighten Elly's impression that the war was by way of being a bit of pleasant, if exciting diversion. There were, of course, moments when the newspaper accounts of battles depressed her considerably, but those moments were comparatively infrequent.

It did something else, too. It brought about a consummation of Muriel's most devout wish: Irving Houseman, having won an ensign's commission, was ordered aboard a destroyer, and before he sailed they decided to announce their engagement. He and Muriel were all for getting married, but the Hoffmans wouldn't hear of that. It was unfair to Muriel, her parents said. Supposing, God forbid, anything should happen, and she should be left a widow at her age? And that might not be all, either, as Mrs. Hoffman pointed out. Even if young folks did think they knew it all nowadays, nature sometimes fooled them. No. Marriage was out of the question. But the plan of announcing the engagement met with unqualified approval. No harm could come of that. They had intended to announce it in June if the war hadn't come along, and now

it was September, and Irving would be sailing shortly. And having no sons to put the war on a personal basis for her, Mrs. Hoffman felt rather pleased at the idea of an official prospective son-in-law.

It was wonderful for Muriel. There was a great thrill the Sunday morning that the engagement was announced in *The Times*. Ordinarily Mrs. Hoffman wouldn't have dreamed of doing anything so unrefined as that, but everybody was being economical on account of the war, and she didn't think it would be right to spend a lot of money on engraved announcements. So there it was in *The Times*:

Hoffman—Houseman. Mr. and Mrs. Milton Hoffman, 504 West End Avenue, announce the engagement of their daughter, Muriel, to Ensign Irving Houseman, U. S. N., son of Mr. and Mrs. David Houseman, of 508 West End Avenue. At home on Sunday, September 27th, from three to six.

That was another thing occasioned by the war. Mrs. Hoffman and Muriel would have liked a hotel reception, but they thought it would be more fitting under the circumstances to have it at home. Everything very simple. No splurge.

It was a lovely reception. Muriel looked very sweet in an afternoon dress of cream lace, with a blue and mauve sash, and a corsage of orchids. And Irving in his new uniform was a handsome and stalwart figure. Muriel's ring was simply divine, everyone agreed. It was so simple and yet so stunning. A square cut diamond—they were awfully new then—set very chastely in platinum. For an engagement present Irving's parents had given her a lovely little service pin—stripes of tiny diamonds, rubies and

sapphires, with a little star in the center. It was a sweet sentiment, Mrs. Hoffman thought, but rather impractical. After all, she could have worn one of the regulation enamel service pins for Irving, and what would she do with this thing when the war was over? Of course, as Muriel pointed out, she could always have the stones set into something else.

Eleanor watched the entire proceedings with a slight feeling of envy. Not that she begrudged Muriel her happiness and excitement. But she couldn't help wishing that she could be just as publicly proprietary of Ted. Nearly every girl had someone who really belonged to her, for whom she could wear a service pin, about whom she could talk intimately—a father, a brother, a husband, a fiancé. It was all part of the war game.

3

She spoke to Ted about it when he came up next time, and he told her that she was a lot closer to him than Muriel was to Irving, but that didn't help much. He even bought her a little enameled service pin, which she wore for a few days, but later put away because she felt a little as though she were cheating by wearing it.

It was November before she saw Ted again, and this time it was good-by. He was ordered overseas. He had, of course, to spend his last day with his family, but the day before that he came to call for Elly at twelve o'clock. They were going to lunch and to the theater. Then they were going to have dinner somewhere and go home afterward, as the family would be out. Through lunch they were very gay and festive, eating at Murray's Roman Gardens because they could dance there. As they fox-trotted around the floor Elly could notice people looking

at Ted and commenting on how handsome he was. He did look gorgeous in his uniform. The army training had cured him of much of his untidiness, and straightened his slouching shoulders. His face was deeply tanned from the outdoor life and altogether he was a figure to command admiration. Elly was frightfully proud.

They went to see *Why Marry?* which they adored, and which kept them gay throughout the afternoon, although they both grew quite intense over the difficulties of Estelle Winwood and Shelly Hull. All lovers reminded them of themselves.

Between theater and dinner there was nothing special to do, so they got on a bus and rode down to Washington Square, wandered aimlessly around the square for a while and then sauntered, in spite of the rather stiff weather, west on Fourth Street, looking into all the silly little shop windows, with their painted cigarette cases, orange smocks and trick jewelry.

"I wonder what it'd be like to live down here!" Elly said. "I'd like to try it some time."

"I guess it would be fun," hazarded Ted, "the only thing is you're so labeled if you do. You know, professional Bohemian. A reputation to live up to. If you ever get to the point where you can beat it away from home, go to some other neighborhood, then no one can say you're only doing it to be Bohemian." Elly laughed.

"Swell chance of ever getting away."

"I'll bet you'll do it," he said. "When I come back I'll help you, if you haven't done it by that time."

They walked about the village a bit more, then went back to the square and started uptown again. Dinner in the Claridge Grill.

"Let's go there," Elly said, "I love their grapefruit

cocktails. The music is good too, and we can sit along the wall." They danced there too, and it was after eight when they left. Through the whole day both had carefully refrained from the remotest approach to the subject of his sailing. They went uptown on a bus, and Elly, although she hated the cold, was prompted by some instinct to suggest riding on top. She knew obscurely that she wouldn't be able to get sappy up there; she'd be too much occupied trying not to freeze. And she didn't want to get talking about his going, because she was afraid she'd do something silly.

Home, they found themselves alone in the house, with the exception of Katie, who was occupied in her own room.

In the library they lapsed into silence. She had switched off all the lights except the desk lamp which glowed dimly. It was exactly like that day almost a year ago, Elly thought, when Ted first announced his intention of going to war, only now he was really going. Strange, his really going wasn't a bit worse than that first thought had been. She looked at him and smiled. She was determined to be brave. From the depths of the big rocker where he was sitting, he held out his arms, and she flew into them. He kissed her hair and eyelids and her mouth, and she kissed the top of his head and the tip of his nose and the cleft in his chin.

"Smile," she commanded, "I want to kiss the dimples. I love your dimples, Ted. I wish I had some. Smile!"

"Silly," and he grinned, making deep crevices in his cheeks. She marked them with her little finger, then kissed them. "Love me?"

"Of course. Do you?"

"You know I do, lunatic."

"You won't get married to anyone else while I'm away?"

"How ridiculous. Of course not. You won't fall for one of those beautiful French girls, will you?"

"Nope. They're not beautiful, anyway. They're too fat. And their ankles are bad. I don't think it will be hard to stay true to you. It'll be harder for you, with all these swivel chair officers hanging around."

"Well, you know what a lot of use I have for them, don't you?" indignantly.

"Don't get mad, darling. I know you'll wait for me. And then I'll get a job, and as soon as I have enough money to take care of you, we'll get married."

"Will we have to live in Jersey City?"

Ted laughed. "Gosh, no. I hate the place. I'll get a job over here and we'll live wherever you like. It's much cheaper there, though."

"I know," Elly agreed, "but by that time I'll be working, and I'll be able to buy my own clothes. Besides, you know I'll get the money my grandmother left me when I'm twenty-one."

"Well, that's a long time off. We can settle the details when I come back." She wished he wouldn't say that. Every time he mentioned coming back, a horrid fear clutched at her mind. Supposing he shouldn't? Some of them didn't. She buried her face in his tunic, and clung to him. He held her close, and sat there silently, rocking rhythmically back and forth in the dim light. How long they sat that way Elly did not know, but a slight noise down the hall brought her back to realities.

"What time is it?" she asked. Ted told her it was half past ten.

"We must be all shipshape before mother gets in," she

said, smoothing her hair and her dress. "And wait here a minute." She ran into her room and came back with a square box.

"This is to take with you," she said, giving him the box. In it was a silver cigarette case, engine-turned, with his monogram in the corner.

"Oh, gee," he said, "this is swell." He snapped it open and found it filled with Camels. "You're a peach. Thank you. I've got something for you, too," and from his tunic pocket he fished a small tissue paper package. He handed it to Elly somewhat awkwardly. Unwrapping it she discovered a bracelet of antique gold, flexible and linked with delicate chains.

"Oooh," she breathed, "it's beautiful." She held up her face to be kissed.

"I hope you like it," Ted said. "I wanted to get you a ring, but I knew that would make difficulties, so I thought a bracelet would be the best substitute. Your mother won't mind that, will she?"

"Don't care if she does."

"Look where I'm putting it," said Ted, as he placed the cigarette case in his hip pocket. "If I come home and tell you that your gift saved my life, the way it always happened in Civil War stories, you'll know that I must have been crawling on my hands and knees away from the enemy at the time. Oh, say," and he took it out again, "haven't you got a picture I can put in here? I haven't got a single one of you."

"Well, I have nothing but that album of snaps that we took up in the mountains." She found it, and together they went through the book, exclaiming over the snaps and reminding each other of events of past summers, until they found a picture that satisfied Ted. He tore it care-

fully from the album, and pasted it into the cigarette case.

"Guess I'll have to go now," Ted said, looking at his watch and finding it after eleven. "I'd rather be gone when your folks get in. You know how older people are."

"Yes. I think it would be better, too." She smiled, tremulously. Ted smiled back, and when he spoke his voice was husky.

"Let's not act foolish, kid," he said. "We've had such a good time all day and I want to take away a bright picture." Eleanor gulped.

"All right," she said shakily, but smiling. "I won't act foolish. Only you'd better hurry. Beat it before I fall down on the job. I'm no stoic."

"What a good sport you are," Ted answered. "C'mon then, good-by. It won't be for long." He held her tight for a minute, kissed her very hard, opened the door and was on his way down the hall to the elevator. "'By," he called. Elly stood in the doorway, tears blinding her.

"'By," she called back. Her voice sounded quite normal. When the elevator had gone down she shut the door and went back into the library. She sat down in the rocker, which was still marked with the imprint of his figure.

After a minute or two she dried her eyes and started, almost automatically, to straighten up the room. She picked up the old snapshot album and stood looking at the page from which he had torn her picture. Right next to the torn space was a snap of Ted which had been taken on the same day. She looked at it thoughtfully, and shook her head.

"Do you know," she said aloud, "I don't believe I'll ever

see you again.” Then, as though she had suddenly heard herself, she smiled, and returned to normal. How she was dramatizing the situation. Probably every girl thought the exact same thing. Of course he’d come back. Nothing could possibly happen to him. He was too alive, too vital. And, besides, he was too lucky.

BOOK II

CHAPTER XII

I

SHE never did see him again.

The circumstances under which she learned of his death were much more dramatic than any she could, even with her instinct for the dramatic, have devised.

It was Armistice Day. Coming home late in the afternoon, after the hours of wild excitement to dress for a party to which she was going with Chester Adelstein, she found a letter on her dressing table, a letter with a Jersey City postmark. Wonderingly she looked at it, wonderingly, and with a vague unformed fear. Finally she tore it open. It was from Rose Levine, Ted's sister.

"Dear Eleanor" [it said simply]. "I'm taking it for granted that you'll want to know. Ted was killed in action on the twentieth of October. We received the official notice last week, but you can understand that I couldn't get around to letting you know sooner.

"I don't know how we're going to bear it. He was so wonderful. And I know it will be hard for you. Please come to see us some time, won't you? Yours,

"ROSE LEVINE."

Elly sat on the edge of her bed and read the note over and over. For a long time her mind simply refused to accept it. It just didn't mean anything. Her whole being was numb. Then the numbness gradually left her and the idea began to penetrate her brain. Ted was killed. He didn't exist any more. Killed on the twentieth of October. And today was the eleventh of November, and the war was

over. What difference did it make now, whether the war was over or not? There was only one reason why she had wanted the war to be over, and that was so he would come back. She remembered the night he went away. She'd said to herself then that she'd never see him again. But she hadn't believed it. She'd only said it because it was the dramatic thing to say. And it was true. She'd never see him again. She opened the dressing table drawer and took out the letters he'd written from overseas. There were only a few, and the latest one had been mailed on the eighteenth of October. He'd been dead when she received it. And all those days she'd been going to dances and parties and having a good time, without the faintest premonition that he was gone. That seemed the cruelest thing of all. Something should have told her.

Katie came in with her evening dress, which she had been pressing, and that reminded her of to-night's party. She couldn't go. She simply couldn't face people. There was only one thing she wanted to do, and that was crawl into bed and cover up her face and stay that way forever and ever.

She was cold, shaking with a chill. She took off her dress, put on a warm bathrobe, and got into bed. Mrs. Hoffman, coming home a few minutes later from an afternoon of bridge, found her there.

"What's the matter?" she exclaimed. "Do you feel sick? Have you got any symptoms?" The influenza epidemic was still raging at the time. Eleanor reached under the pillow and handed her mother Rose's note. Mrs. Hoffman read it and burst into tears.

"How terrible!" she exclaimed. "Poor Mrs. Levine. Thank God I have no sons."

"Mother," Eleanor asked, pleadingly, "will you do

something for me? I can't go to that party tonight. Will you call up Chester and tell him I'm sick, tell him you're afraid I'm getting the flu or something. Please?" Mrs. Hoffman, without argument, agreed. She went to the telephone and lied nobly. Elly could tell from her mother's conversation that Chester was expressing concern. And within an hour there was delivered to her a great box of roses, with Chester's card.

It wasn't until she saw the flowers that she cried. Then the dam burst, and she abandoned herself to hysterical sobs.

CHAPTER XIII

I

FOR two weeks Elly walked about in a daze. The excitement and thrill of the early days of peace meant nothing to her. In fact, there was no meaning to anything. She just did things automatically, ate, worked, went to school, slept. There was nothing in the world except the fact that Ted was out of it. He would never come back.

Mrs. Hoffman, gently but determinedly, spoke to her. It wouldn't do, she said, for Elly to continue moping that way. After all, she may have been very fond of Ted, but she hadn't been married to him, or even engaged to him, and what was the use of giving up all her friends and good times.

"I don't want to," Elly replied, "but I just can't help it. I couldn't have a good time if I did go out. Being with other boys would only make it worse instead of better. I'd keep thinking how much nicer he was."

"That's silly," Mrs. Hoffman argued. "You didn't see him so very much when he was . . . alive. And you managed to enjoy the company of other boys."

"But that's just it," Elly told her. "I knew he was somewhere, and the fact that the others weren't as nice as he only made it better when I did see him. Oh, you can't understand."

Still, it was quite true what her mother said, she came to realize. She couldn't stop her own life, just because his life had stopped. She must pick things up and go on. Well, she would do what other people did when they were badly hurt, she decided. She would plunge deeply into

work. She would try to get a job. Mr. Carver had been most encouraging about her designs, told her she had good prospects for the future. She didn't know exactly what she could do, but it would be something in the theater, she thought. She wanted to design costumes and make posters, chiefly. But there were steps you had to take to reach that place, and she didn't know exactly how to go about it. She wondered who would be the best person to advise her. Eva knew a lot of people in the advertising and theatrical business. And, of course, there was Henry Wells, who knew everything and everybody. She'd get in touch with him. Hank had never got beyond Camp Upton, and he managed to get to town quite frequently. She'd write to him there and ask him to meet her and talk it all over with her.

Suddenly she found herself smiling. It was the first time she'd smiled since Armistice Day, when the letter came. She tried to figure out what the smile meant, and discovered by retracing the steps of her thoughts that she had been smiling in anticipation of her future success as an artist. How awful of her, she thought, to be able to smile that way. For a few moments she had actually forgotten to grieve.

In a sense it was alarming. To be able to forget like that!

Her return to life dated from that moment. Not that she stopped thinking of Ted, or caring for him. But the sharpness of the pain lasted such a very little while. Things went on, days passed inexorably. Gradually she found she could say his name without wanting to die, without a frightful stabbing pain in her heart. He was her own Ted and she loved him, but there was less and less poignancy to the wound caused by his death.

It wasn't quite such a hardship to be with Chester, after a little while. At first everything he did served only to remind her of Ted, but soon that stopped and he was just Chester again. Elly felt more than anything else a tremendous resentment against herself for recovering so quickly. She found she didn't hate life after all. She was aghast at herself. Maybe she hadn't loved him at all. What a shallow nature she must have.

It occurred to her one day that now she could return, with increased force, to her campaign for freedom. With Ted gone there was nobody in the whole world who had any real claim on her. She belonged to herself again. Maybe there was something more than blind chance in his being killed. He'd always wanted her to be free, and yet, although he was the symbol of her freedom, he was beginning to bind her, would have bound her more if he'd come back and married her. Because she would have grown to love him so frightfully that her whole being would have been his instead of her own. It would have been wonderful, of course, and she would have happily given up the idea, but it almost seemed that his death was a sign to her that she must keep on.

One of the first things she must do then, she decided, was to get some work, something that would necessitate being out a good part of the time, something that would take her into still another world. Because look at what going to art school had done for her! It had been hard, to be sure, but had brought a measure of freedom that she had never dreamed of. And if she explored still further into the world outside, she would gain even more freedom. It would be even harder than school, she knew that. Her parents never believed that she meant to work, and Mrs. Hoffman, in particular, cherished a not too

secret belief, fostered by hope, that now with Ted forever gone, she might regard the attentions of Chester Adelstein with a little more favor.

2

Elly wrote to Henry Wells, who met her for lunch one day the following week. She explained to him that she was eager to find work of some kind, and told him the reason.

"It doesn't matter much about the money," she said. "Because no matter how much he may storm and rave, I know father'll never pull the stern parent act on me. But I do want to get started in that direction, because some day I'll want to live alone, and I think that's the best way to plan for it."

"You know," she went on, "I don't think so awfully much of this career stuff for itself as most girls are supposed to. The way I see it, it's a means to an end. If I make good at drawing it will be a sort of way out for me. A kind of substitute for getting married. Not as good, of course, but still something. It'll be something to hang my peculiarities on."

"You're a wise kid," Hank grinned. "Do you think you've got enough stuff?"

"Well," Elly told him, "Carver thinks I'm pretty good, and he's not easy to please. Look, I'll show you some of the stuff." And she opened a portfolio containing plates and sketches.

"Mmmm," was Hank's comment. "I don't know a damn about this stuff, but it looks all right to me. I'll tell you, I'll give you a note to Morgan Princeley. He's general manager for the Kalbfleisch outfit, and what that bird doesn't know about the theater isn't worth knowing. If

he likes this stuff he'll help you get started. He can help you, too. A word from him is an open sesame to practically any theatrical office in New York. He'll flirt with you, of course, but don't pay any attention to that. He's harmless, even if people do call him the Casanova of Broadway. And, listen, I'll speak to the Sunday editor about you. Sometimes they give out fashion work. Care to do that?"

"Of course. I'll do anything."

"Well, I'll ask Grover, and let you know if he has anything. If I were you, as long as it isn't a question of making a living, I wouldn't take a straight job with any one firm. Go slowly and free lance. You come out better in the end that way. You can make much more money and your stuff appears in a lot of different places instead of being concentrated."

An hour later Elly was sitting in the reception room of the Kalbfleisch Production Company, waiting for Morgan Princeley to read Hank's note of introduction.

The first thought that registered in Elly's mind was that he didn't look in the least like the popular conception of a theatrical manager. In the first place he wasn't fat, in the second place he didn't have a derby hat on, and in the third place there wasn't a big black cigar sticking out of the corner of his mouth.

"How do you do, Miss Hoffman," he said, holding out a soft hand, "I'm glad to meet you. Any friend of Hank Wells is a friend of mine. We worked together in St. Louis. But I left the newspaper game a long time ago. The work's too hard for an old man like me." Elly smiled.

"What pretty dimples you have," he said. That made her smile more, because she knew perfectly well that she hadn't any dimples at all.

"So you want to get some art work to do? Hank says your stuff is pretty good."

"Yes, I'm anxious to get started," Elly said, "and Mr. Wells told me you were the very best person in New York to see."

"Well, I have a certain amount of influence in theatrical circles," Princeley admitted. "Let's see your sketches. Although a pretty little creature like you doesn't really need to work if she doesn't care to. What you need is a daddy to take care of you. How does that idea strike you?" His tone was altogether conversational, as though he were inquiring about the weather. It was perfectly plain to Elly that this was merely part of a formula which the man applied to all girls.

"I don't care so much for that idea," she said gravely, and with as much casualness as she could muster. "It doesn't fit in with my plans."

"Oh." He said it with a gentle sigh, and a little gleam of amusement shone in his small, satyr-like eyes. His hair, too, she noticed, graying hair that had once been the color of her own, was curly like the hair of satyrs in statues, and she looked down at his shoes, to see whether he had cloven hooves instead of feet. He was a kindly satyr, though.

"I just wondered. Of course, there would be more subtle ways of finding out," he continued, "but why waste time? It doesn't make any difference to me, you understand. I'll do just as much to help you, either way, only it's easier if I know your exact requirements."

"Mine are simple," Elly said. Somehow, in spite of his perfectly astounding remarks, he inspired her with a feeling of friendliness. She remembered what Hank Wells had said—he was harmless, even if he was called the Casanova of Broadway—and she had a feeling that he

would really help her, that it would be all right to tell him her ambition.

"It's hard to explain in a few words," she went on, "but what I want is to sort of belong to myself. I've been fighting since I was about fifteen, to escape from my environment, and I don't want to get out of one thing and into another. That's one reason why I'm not interested in the daddy idea." Princeley beamed upon her.

"You're clever as well as beautiful," he said. "You ought to go far. How old are you?"

"Twenty."

"You're pretty sensible for twenty." He opened her portfolio, and was just drawing out the sketches when his telephone rang. Ten minutes elapsed while he conversed gaily with someone, obviously a woman. When he had hung up he turned to Elly and said:

"Know who that was? That was Mrs. Reginald Van Huysen. Invited me to a week-end party she's giving at Tuxedo. Yes, I manage to get to quite a few society events, even if I'm just plain Morgan Princeley of Broadway."

"The Casanova of Broadway," Elly said, her cheeks flushing a little. Princeley threw back his head and roared.

"Is that what they call me?" he asked, with evident delight.

"That's what I've heard," she answered. "Are you?"

"Oh, I'm not so bad," he said. "If anything comes my way, I take it, but I never work hard to get it. I believe in letting the women set the pace. If what you want is to be friends, that's what we'll be. I'll guarantee you'll be as safe as in your mother's arms. You really ought to come and have dinner with me at my apartment some

time. You'd enjoy my books. Do you know that I have one of the best collections of English prose of anybody in America? And I have some books on art that would interest you tremendously. You must come up some time. How about it, baby?"

As always to hide her embarrassment, and a feeling that she did not know how to cope with this strange man, Elly sought refuge in silence and her slow smile. And as usual, it availed.

"You're a pretty wise kid for your age," he repeated. "Very mysterious, too. You pique me. It's too bad you don't want to play with me. I could teach you a whole lot of lovely things about life. But, to tell you the truth, I think you've got the right dope. Keep on belonging to yourself as long as you can. It's the best way. See my motto," and he pointed to a framed sign on the wall near his desk. "Be hard; live dangerously," it said, and underneath was the name of its author, Nietzsche. "That's the way to live if you want to own yourself in the end. And be very careful of men; you won't find many like me, who'll let you set the pace. You're too pretty. Why, you look just like Simonetta, when Sandro Botticelli loved her in the spring time. Your hair is exactly the color of hers and . . ." The stenographer called in shrilly:

"Miss LeMaire on 3400, Mr. Princeley." He picked up a wire and turned his face, beaming, to the transmitter.

"Hello, baby," he said. "Tonight? Where? . . . Sure. We'll do a little hoofing. . . . Whose Rolls-Royce are you riding in this week? . . . You're certainly a speedy worker, kid. 'By."

"Yes," he went on, exactly as though there had been no interruption, "your hair is the color of Simonetta's, and your eyes, too. You have a spiritual, intellectual face.

Do you know what George Moore said?" Not waiting to discover whether she knew this particular utterance or not, he continued:

"He said that no man could find his true passion except in an intellectual woman. A girl like you brings out the best in a man. I certainly could fall for you, baby." Elly, smiling, was aware of a growing impatience. This was awfully amusing, and enlightening to a degree, but, after all, she had come here for a definite purpose, to find out whether he could help her get some work to do. And he seemed not a bit nearer that part of the meeting than he had when she came in. She didn't exactly know what to do. Some instinct told her to curb her impatience. If you want something from a person, you must adapt yourself to his tactics. But she fingered the portfolio meaningfully, and his straying attention was caught.

"Oh, yes," he said, "let's see them." He drew out several sketches and ranged them on his desk. "Hm," he murmured, "They're not at all bad. Where'd you say you study? Oh, Carver's. Good man, I know him well. Now, let me see, where can I send you. You want a place where you can learn as well as work, don't you?"

"Well, Hank thought I ought to try to free lance, not take a definite job with one place."

"Fine. That makes it easier. I'm pretty sure you can get some part time work up at the Try-Ad Corporation. They do mostly theatrical work, but a little commercial stuff, too, like perfumes, underwear and things like that. They're always giving out assignments, and I'm pretty sure they'll find something for you if I send you over. I'll write a note to Paul Bradley, he's the art director. You go right over with it, and I'll call him up while you're on the way. He's a good scout." Princeley sat at his

machine and laboriously typed out a note. Elly collected her sketches and glanced around the room. Pictures of actresses, cluttered with quotation marks. Framed letters from celebrities, thanking him for one thing or another over a period of ten years. She wondered how old he was. He looked about forty. But he seemed to have done so much, been so many places, lived such a lot; he must really be older.

He turned from the typewriter, handing her the note. "See," he said, "I've told him you are an old friend. He'll be very nice to you, and I'm sure he'll give you some work. Now run along and catch him. I know he's always in at this hour."

"Oh, thank you," she said, some of the eagerness escaping from her in spite of her efforts to keep quite calm. "It's awfully nice of you to bother."

"Why, it's a pleasure to help a sweet thing like you. Any time. Let me know what happens, and drop in once and a while for a little chat." He walked toward the door with her, and before he opened it he stopped, catching her by the shoulders.

"Got a nice little kiss for papa," he asked, "before you go?" He bent and Elly ducked her head ever so slightly. They missed connections. He laughed. "Oh, well," he said, "if you don't want to it's all right with me." And, laughing, he ushered her out.

Passing through the reception room she felt the appraising eyes of the stenographer and office boy upon her. It was a horrid feeling. Coming out of that private office with its closed door made her feel exactly as though she had a great scarlet letter emblazoned upon her dress. Funny. The appearance of guilt was just as bad—worse, really—than guilt itself. What you did didn't

seem to matter. It was what people thought you did.

On the way down to the Try-Ad Company Elly flew. Her steps were so light and fast that she barely touched the ground. Her heart was beating wildly and she could feel her eyes shining. She had the consciousness of looking pretty. Oh, if she could only get something to do, no matter how little. It would be such a definite step in the direction of liberty.

Mr. Bradley was expecting her and he sent out word that he would be with her in a minute. The minute turned into fifteen, and Elly was just getting to that slightly wilted state that is inevitably brought about by too long a wait for a possible employer, when a neat young woman came out and conducted her into Mr. Bradley's office. He looked at her sketches which he proclaimed interesting but not startling, and said he thought he could fit her in somewhere.

"I don't know exactly what I want you to do," he said. "There are a couple of campaigns you could work on, and I'll think it over and let you know tomorrow which you're to do. You'll work directly under me. Come in at ten o'clock tomorrow morning, and we'll lay out our plans." He looked up with an air of dismissal. Elly rose.

"Thank you, Mr. Bradley," she said. "You . . . you're not just doing this for Mr. Princeley's sake, are you?" He smiled.

"No, child, don't worry. Your work is good, and I'm sure you'll be useful. And I like to have someone decorative around me. As a matter of fact, you'll be able to learn a lot from me. Be sure to be here on time in the morning."

"Oh, yes," she gasped, and ran out. In the street, she found that it was four o'clock. She turned toward Fifth

Avenue and walked rapidly north. Everything in her was singing. How easy it had been. No struggles of a poor little girl in a great city. She wondered what it would be. Mr. Bradley seemed awfully nice. It would be lots of fun working there. From his office, which was on Fortieth Street, between Fifth and Sixth Avenue, you could see Bryant Park and the Bush Terminal Building. It was a poetical sort of place. How lovely life was. Oh! A sharp pang smote her as suddenly she remembered Ted. How could life be lovely when he was not in it? But it *was*. That was the ghastly part of it. What a shallow person she must be, Elly thought, ruefully, to be able to forget grief so easily. But try as she would, she just could not remain sorrowful. There was tomorrow, when she would really get started on some work. How on earth could she keep that secret over night? It would be hard not to tell, but she knew that she should wait until she had some specific information to give her parents.

She walked to Fifty-ninth Street and then mounted a bus for home. She tried to read, but couldn't. She wanted to *do* something, to dance or jump around, to make funny happy noises. But she didn't because she didn't know how. She was a grave soul, and didn't really know how to behave under the strange emotion of happy excitement. But this thing was blazing up within, this thing she had felt the first day she'd stayed down at Eva's for tea and had come late in the taxicab, a kind of power inside her to do anything at all she wanted. A power to withstand any onslaught. She owned the world. That was it.

3

As a matter of fact, it proved to be not at all hard to refrain from telling the family about her promised job.

Irving was at the house for dinner, and they were discussing plans for the wedding.

"Well, of course," Irving said, "I'm in favor of a small family affair. I'd rather just drop in on Dr. Hirschberg some afternoon and call it a wedding, but I know we could never get away with that."

"I should say not," Mrs. Hoffman said. "You really act as though getting married was something to be ashamed of. After the way I've worked and slaved all my life for my children, I should at least have the pleasure of seeing my daughter married decently. It would be bad enough if her father couldn't afford it. But under the circumstances. . . . And as long as I can't expect any pleasure from my oldest child"—a withering look in the direction of Eleanor accompanied this sally—"I might as well get all the happiness I can from Muriel. Besides, she wants her friends at her wedding, don't you, darling?"

"Certainly." Muriel smiled prettily at Irving. "After all, Irv," she said, "a girl's only a bride once." Irving laughed.

"You're optimistic," he said. "You can't tell nowadays." Mrs. Hoffman was shocked.

"Irving," she remonstrated, "you shouldn't talk like that, even in fun. It might be bad luck."

"Have you decided on a date?" Eleanor inquired.

"Not definitely," Muriel answered. "We thought April would be a nice month. We'll just be engaged two years then, and that's long enough for anyone. And I don't want to be a June bride. June's such a common month to get married in."

"But you'll have to stop school. If you waited till June you'd be through that, and ready for regular teaching. You know, in case of the well known emergency."

"Aren't you cheerful," Muriel exclaimed. "Irving doesn't want to wait, do you, dear? And he doesn't want me to be a teacher, anyway."

"No," Irving said, "I guess I'll be able to take care of my wife all right."

"I think the fifteenth of April sounds nice," Muriel said. "Wonder what day that's on?" Irving took out a pocket calendar and consulted it. "It's a Sunday," he said.

"Lemme see," said Muriel, snatching it from him. "Oh, yes. Well, that's out, then. How about Tuesday? That's the tenth."

"All right with me."

"Well, you don't have to settle that right this minute, do you?" Mrs. Hoffman said. "It only takes two weeks to get the invitations out. You can make your final decision later. We'll have to start looking for a hotel."

"Well, I know one place I won't have it," Muriel said, emphatically, "and that's the Astor. They don't even speak English there. The official language is Yiddish."

"How about the Biltmore? The Vanderbilt is rather nice. Quite exclusive, too."

"Well, the thing to do is go around and see the ball rooms."

Mr. Hoffman spoke for the first time.

"Of course," he said, "my only connection with this whole business is a financial one, but don't you think I might have something to say about it? Suppose you permit me to go along with you when you look for the hotel."

"Why, of course, Milton," Mrs. Hoffman said. "I didn't think you'd care to be bothered, that's all. I'd much rather have you with me. It's such a responsibility settling those things alone."

All during dinner and throughout the evening plans for the approaching nuptials were under discussion. A couple of times, Eleanor picked up a book and tried to read, but each time she was reproved by her mother, for being heartless and lacking in interest.

"I suppose you'll balk at being maid of honor," Mrs. Hoffman said. "Honestly, you'd think you didn't belong to this family at all. You show so little interest in your own sister's wedding."

"Of course, I'll be the maid of honor," Elly replied, "but I don't see why I have to jump through hoops now. After all, you'll settle it without me. If it were my wedding I'd just go down to City Hall and get married by the clerk."

"That's right," said her mother. "Anything to be different. I swear to God, sometimes I don't believe you are my own child. If you had been born in a hospital instead of at home, I'd positively believe the nurse had mixed you up with some other baby. It doesn't seem possible that any daughter of mine can have the ideas you have." Eleanor didn't answer. She didn't want to quarrel tonight, and answering would have meant quarrelling. Instead she just hugged her secret closer. Wait until tomorrow night. Then she'd have something to say.

She went to bed early, and abandoned herself to feverish planning for the future. Of course, now that Ted was gone she'd never get married. She'd work hard, be very successful, make a lot of money, and devote her entire efforts to getting free and staying free.

Getting the job meant a terrific lot to her, but not because it was starting her on the way to a great artistic career. Eleanor had no illusions about her future as an artist. She liked to fool around with line and color and texture; she adored the theater and its glamor caught

her, but she had no dreams of greatness. Career in the sense of tremendous achievement never occurred to her. To her a career, as she had said to Hank Wells, was simply a means to an end. She sensed dimly that with the words artistic and career to play with it would be a little less hard for her to get her essential self into her own keeping. If she talked, when the right time came, about furthering her career, it would be a shade less hard to get away. She didn't really feel that way about it, either. It seemed to Elly that if you wanted to be by yourself that was enough reason why you should be; that career and all that sort of thing should be unnecessary. But mixed up with all her curious dreaming about spiritual integrity, was a streak of hard practicality. Money talks, so does a reputation. People who "do things" always have more liberty. Even her mother believed that. How she would feel about it when it came right down to cases, Elly wondered. But this much she knew—she must emphasize the career stuff for all it was worth, it would be the lever upon which she would have to swing her ultimate going.

The thought of her ultimate going suffused her whole being with warmth and light. The picture she evoked of solitariness always made her feel the way a romantic girl would when a vision of her prince-on-a-white-charger came to her. Lofty, thrilled, filled with a literal ecstasy, almost unbearably poignant. Some day she would be alone, and her soul would be her own. And she could shut out everything she didn't want.

Somewhere inside her a little voice clamored. That was a selfish way to live. Gravely she regarded the accusation. Yes, she decided, but living this way was only a sop to the selfishness of others. When you came right

down to it, all life seemed to be a tournament of selfishness. If you were unselfish, then you were simply catering to the selfishness of someone else. It was merely a question of poisoning one person's selfishness against another's. And it seemed to her that the question was simply which was more important. Anyway, she decided comfortingly, it was more than selfishness in this case, it was self-preservation. Eventually, if she remained, it would get her. So she would have to get away physically in order to keep free spiritually. Yes, that was selfish, she concluded, but she guessed she'd just have to be selfish. Nothing seemed so important as keeping her spirit alive. She would do that, she said to herself, clutching the pillow hotly, at any cost to anyone.

At ten o'clock the next morning she presented herself at Paul Bradley's office. He was ready for her, and this time there was no waiting.

"Hello there," he said gayly, as she came in. "All ready for work? Well, I've about decided on what you can do. We've recently taken on a fashion letter stunt for Kleins, the song publishers. Their press agent has a syndicate of about seven hundred papers, and she can shoot this stuff to all of them. Our job is to write about three letters a week and have each one illustrated. Now, we use the names of different girls who are singing Klein songs—some of them are in shows that Klein publishes, others are vaudeville singers who use their popular songs. You don't have to draw the particular girl; just some sort of fashion sketch that will tie up the story. Think you'll like that?" Elly spoke eagerly.

"It sounds wonderful."

"Well," said Bradley, judicially, "it's good for a be-

ginning. Not hard, regular, and tied up with the theater. That's what you want the most, isn't it?"

"Yes, oh, yes. I'm crazy about the theater." Bradley smiled at her eagerness.

"Righto," he said. "Then we'll start right in, shall we? Now, we must settle our financial arrangements, too. You'll have three sketches a week to do. I'll pay you five dollars each. How does that suit you?"

Elly nodded. Fifteen dollars a week. Right at the beginning, and for such easy work. It was wonderful, unbelievable!

"Do you want me to work here?" she asked.

"No, I don't think so," Bradley said. "Do the sketches home and drop in here a couple of times a week. Later on I'll have other work for you, and sometimes I hear of outside stuff that people want done. Be sure of one thing, though. Always keep a week ahead. Do six the first week and if you can get in an extra one now and then, do it by all means, because you never know when you're going to get behind for one reason or another.

"And, listen," he said, "let me give you one piece of advice. Sign everything. No matter how insignificant it is, sign it. There's nothing so important in this business as having people recognize your name. Even if they don't know where they've seen it, it'll convey something to 'em if they know they've seen it somewhere."

Elly floated over to school on air. She went to Mr. Carver's office and told him all about it. He was delighted.

"I knew you could do it," he said. "You're an intelligent girl, Eleanor. I liked you from the start because you never wore red or pink. When a girl with your coloring has sense enough to stick to brown, green and

blue, then I know she's all right. You're staying in school?"

She explained that the work would take up very little of her time, and that she would surely finish the term.

"That's good," said Mr. Carver. "I don't want to let you go yet. You're no Leonardo, but with the right guidance you should make a considerable commercial success." Elly glowed, and skipped downstairs to tell Eva and Bobbie. They were duly thrilled.

"How marvelous," exclaimed Bobbie, "How'd you ever do it?" Elly explained and Bobbie laughed.

"Hank Wells! What do you know about that? Has he a crush on you? He never offered to find a job for me."

"Have you ever let him know you wanted one?"

"Well, no. But that's not it. You've got that 'protect me' air. People are always wanting to help you. You'll see. You'll always get everything you want."

"That's true," put in Eva, "but there's something more than that. In spite of that 'protect me' stuff, which is a darn good act, by the way, Elly seems to sort of have some quality that makes people feel she'll be able to go through with whatever they help her to get. Know what I mean? Don't you remember, when she first came to the house, you said you got a sense of potential accomplishment from her?" Elly, standing by, was pleased, of course, but embarrassed. She had never grown altogether accustomed to this trick of Eva and Bobbie, of discussing a third person just as though he were not present.

She was aching to get home and tell the family about it. She wondered whether they would be interested at all. Muriel's imminent marriage occupied such a large part of the horizon that such little matters as jobs for

Eleanor were likely to be overlooked. That had its advantages, too, Elly decided. It would further her aims to just that extent without occasioning any particular trouble.

They were interested, of course, but just as she had figured, the wedding plans were so much more important, that the news was given the most perfunctory attention. For the first minute, before she learned it was a part time job, Mrs. Hoffman was a bit jumpy, but when Eleanor explained that she could do the work in half an hour a day, her mother subsided.

"And I'll get fifteen dollars a week for that, too," Elly said. "I'd hardly get much more than that teaching the first year."

"See, Milton," Mrs. Hoffman said, "it wasn't such a bad idea to let her go to art school, after all." The other three grinned appreciatively at each other. Mrs. Hoffman was like that. No matter how tremendously she might have opposed an idea in its inception, if it met with success later, she invariably assumed the credit for having originated it. At this moment she positively believed that she had been in complete accord with the plan from its very start. And nobody disabused her mind. What was the use? She seemed in a good humor, best keep her that way.

Eleanor was glad she had a date with Chester Adelstein that night. She wanted to impress someone with her news.

He was not only impressed, he was disapproving, and Elly gloried in his disapproval.

"Oh," he said, when she told him, "I suppose you'll be more impossible than ever now. Fifteen dollars a week! You'd think it was a fortune."

"Well, it is, when you earn it yourself, and can keep on going to school. I won't have to take anything from my father now. And it won't be long before I make more. Mr. Bradley says I'll get more work right along."

"I can't see why you're so anxious to earn money. You won't keep at it long."

"Oh, won't I?"

"No. You're normal, like other girls. You'll want to get married and settle down. Oh, why can't you be sensible, like your sister?"

"Why," asked Elly, laughing, "should it make so much difference to you?"

"Because, damn it," Chester replied, "I happen to be crazy about you. I don't know why I am. You're everything I disapprove of. But I fell for you the first minute I saw you. In fact, I fell for you before I ever knew you. God! They told me you were different, but I didn't think you'd be like this. Sometimes I hate you, Elly, but I'm crazy about you just the same, and some day when I'm able to, there's something more important I want to speak to you about." She giggled at this. He *would* say it that way.

"That's why I can't see you starting this professional career stuff. That's all right for girls who have to, but there's no need for it in your case. It'll only make things harder later on."

He was referring to his family, she knew, but not being in the mood for arguing, she did not press him on that point. She was satisfied, anyway, the news had got a rise out of him. It was more of a rise than she'd bargained for or wanted, but, the point was, her great step had been recognized by someone.

CHAPTER XIV

I

ELEANOR slipped into the routine of work with the same ease and pleasure that she had slipped into the routine of Mr. Carver's school. From the beginning she got along well with Paul Bradley. His interest had been aroused by her good looks and her very evident delight with the opportunity he was offering her. And her talent was sufficient. He was pleased, too, with the fact that she had no illusions about her future. He confessed himself tired of romantically inclined young men and women, willing, eager in fact, to starve for their art, and Eleanor's lack of sentimentality about her work appealed very strongly to him.

The three figures a week for Klein's publicity campaign were soon augmented by other work. Sometimes he would call her at school and she would go down to his office for a hurried assignment. Some lettering for a jeweler's advertisement, an interior for a firm who manufactured lace curtains, a dancing girl draped in the swirling silks of some trade-named fabric. It meant quite a bit of money for her, but more than that, as Paul Bradley repeatedly assured her, it was practice. And when the right time came she would get a chance at something really good.

The family continued to be concerned chiefly with the approaching nuptials, so that Eleanor's progress went on practically unnoticed. That was good for her plans. She had it pretty well worked out that after the spring term

was over she would go to work regularly for Mr. Bradley, and not go back to school in the fall. Muriel's wedding was only a little way off in April; in June she, Eleanor, would be twenty-one, and Grandma Hirsch's money would be coming to her. Then she could take definite steps toward getting a place of her own. Just thinking about it sent hot waves of feeling gushing into her throat. How would she go about it? What would her mother do? Of course Eva Gerrard would help her. It would be a slow process. But she had patience. She had waited so long without making any progress that was perceptible, really, —although she knew it was there—it wouldn't be hard to wait a little longer for the real thing to happen. She was living toward it. It was the focal point of her whole existence. Everything else she did, consciously or subconsciously, devolved upon that. Even when she thought of Ted, as she often did, her melancholy was sweet rather than sharp; it was dreadful that he'd had to die, but now he could cause her no regret. Of these mental processes regarding Ted she was scarcely aware. She was conscious only of a feeling of puzzlement that she was not grieving more intensely, and a sense that somehow she was failing the dead boy by not mourning him more deeply.

But, try as she did, he could never remain the sole occupant of her thoughts for very long. Other things, work, the future, the meaning of everything, jostled him rudely or crowded him out altogether.

2

Muriel's wedding on the tenth of April made up in splendor for the enforced simplicity of the engagement. Even the day did its best for them, the sun glittering brilliantly through the windows of the Hotel Vanderbilt

ball room, as Dr. Goodman pronounced "you, Irving, and you, Muriel, man and wife." Muriel was calm. She did not show a trace of nervousness. She couldn't be nervous, she said, because Irving was scared stiff. She was sure he'd say no when Dr. Goodman asked him "do you?"

Mrs. Hoffman and Mrs. Houseman, as well as all the other matrons present, wept copiously during the ceremony. Eleanor fidgeted. The responsibilities of her position as maid of honor weighed heavily on her and the marriage lines oppressed her. Always when she heard them she felt that same sense of a terrific weight. It was all so final, so forever! How could people dare?

The bustle and clatter and confusion after the ceremony recalled to Eleanor sharply the scene in front of the temple after their confirmation. So many years ago, and not the slightest difference in any of these people. Their thoughts were the same, their actions the same, their looks the same, except that most of them were showing signs of plumpness. Was she the only one who had changed? It was a rather terrifying thought, because if she were, it occurred to her, maybe she was the crazy one, and they were sane.

A group of the "old girls" stood talking excitedly, waiting their chance to kiss the bride. Here were five girls with whom she'd been tremendously intimate a few years back, girls she'd seen every day, whose very thoughts she'd known. Now they seemed like strangers, aliens, whose language she couldn't even comprehend. It was bad, she concluded, ever seeing them at all any more, because it made her worry about herself to see them all so untouched.

"Doesn't it make you feel funny, Elly?" asked Fay Wallberg, who had been Mrs. Harold Fink for two years.

"Doesn't what make me feel funny?" Eleanor asked.

"Having Muriel get married first when you're older."

"No, I can't say that it does. I can't see what difference it makes."

"Muriel'd be a fool to wait for Elly," contributed Hilda Adler, whose own wedding had taken place a short time before. "Elly was cut out to be the old maid of the crowd. She always had peculiar ideas. I wish I were as thin as you are. How do you manage it? Diet?"

"No," she said. "I just am. I guess it's a sort of compensation for being peculiar."

"Oh, don't get angry," Hilda exclaimed. "I was just kidding. Come on now, girls, I think we can get a chance at her now. The relatives are nearly all through." They made a dash toward the bridal bower, where Muriel and Irving stood bravely together, receiving the rather vigorous congratulations of their families and friends. Eleanor wished she could go. She was tired, but, of course, it was out of the question for her to leave.

The wedding supper lasted for two hours. It was a marvelous meal and, as Mrs. Henry Katz was heard to say later, "the champagne flew just like water." Toward its close, after all the speeches, including the one about all their troubles being little ones, had been made, and all the toasts drunk, Muriel left the table as unobtrusively as possible, followed by her mother, who seemed to think that by walking on tiptoe she would escape notice.

In turn, Mr. Hoffman, Irving and Eleanor also left the table. Eleanor went to the room upstairs where Muriel was changing to her traveling clothes. Mrs. Hoffman, in tears, was hovering nervously over her, very obviously trying to summon the courage to speak to Muriel.

"Would you mind running downstairs a minute, darling," she finally said to Eleanor, "I want to speak to Muriel about certain things." The words were in capital letters and italics. Both girls laughed.

"You can save yourself the trouble, Ma," Muriel told her, "I know all about it."

"But" . . . Mrs. Hoffman, having brought her courage to the speaking point, hated to be cheated of her opportunity.

"Honestly," said Muriel, quite seriously this time, "I'd rather not talk about it. It's quite unnecessary. Why don't you run along downstairs to the others? Elly'll stay here with me." Reluctantly, Mrs. Hoffman swallowed her words of advice and information, and went back to her guests. Muriel turned to her sister.

"I was dreading a scene like that," she said. "I suppose it's just impossible for her to realize that things aren't the same now as they were when she got married. Thank God, too. Can you imagine anything more terrible than a last minute lecture on what every bride should know?"

"Poor mother," said Eleanor, "she does mean well. She wants to help you. It must be dreadful to be constantly wanting to give yourself to people who don't want to take what you have to offer." Muriel looked up from the bag she was packing, came over to where her sister was standing and put her hand on Eleanor's arm. There were tears in her eyes.

"You know," she said, "I still love you better than any one in the world. *Anyone*. And no matter what happens I always will."

Impulsively they kissed, and then as though ashamed, moved awkwardly apart.

"I'll leave you alone to finish up," Elly said. "I guess Irving is nearly ready. Good-by."

"Good-by," Muriel replied. "I'll write."

They managed to get away from the party without attracting the attention of the guests, and Irving's legal mind had prompted him to engage rooms in the same hotel, by which simple and obvious trick he managed to elude the would-be jesters, who had planned a series of coy interruptions of the nuptial night.

3

"It seems awfully strange not to have Muriel here," said Mrs. Hoffman tearfully, for the hundredth time, one night about two weeks later. "Just think, my little baby, gone away for good. It was a grand wedding, though. How did you like Mrs. Tobias's dress? Not that it makes any difference what that woman wears. She'd look grand in rags, with her figure. Do you really think there was enough wine? And here's her little gloves that she left on the dining-room table. I must put them with her baby shoes."

"Good Lord, Laura," said Mr. Hoffman, with as much show of irritation as he could ever muster, "why do you keep talking of the child as though she were dead?"

"Anyway," added Elly, laughing, "why do you act as though she were your only child? You still have me to comfort you in your old age."

"A fine comfort you'll be! You wouldn't do a thing to make me happy! When you can get a fine boy like Chester Adelstein from a fine family, by just raising your hand, you won't even do it. It would be such a weight off my mind to see my two daughters nicely settled. But, no! Anything to be obstinate."

"I've told you a dozen times, mother, that I don't care for Chester. He's all right to go around with now and then, but I'd be perfectly miserable married to him. We don't agree on a single important thing. And I don't care for his family, either."

"Of course you don't. Or your own family, either. Who do you care for in this whole world but yourself?"

"You don't want me to marry a man I don't love, do you?"

"Love, bah! If you respect a man and he treats you right you'll learn to love him after you're married."

"But I can't see why you're so anxious for me to marry. It isn't as if I were a burden on you and had to get married in order to be supported. In the first place, there's grandma's money. I'll get that in June. And, anyway, I can take care of myself. I'll be earning quite a lot of money soon. And, after all, I'm only twenty."

"Nearly twenty-one."

"Well, you'd think that was ancient. Will you give me *one* real reason why you're so anxious to get me married? Is it because you want me out of your way? If that's it I'll move, as I told you before."

"Now she's starting again! What's so strange about me wanting to see my daughter happily married? Isn't that perfectly natural in a mother? I ask you, Milton, isn't it?"

"It's a ridiculous discussion," Mr. Hoffman said in an annoyed voice. "I wish you'd cut it out. Why is it you two can't be together for five minutes without quarreling?"

"Can I help it if she's so *meschugah* that she won't listen to reason?"

"You haven't answered me yet," Eleanor said doggedly. "I want a reason why you're so anxious for me to marry. You say it's natural for a mother to want her daughter happily married! Granted. But it is not natural for a mother to want her daughter unhappily married. And that's what I'd be if I married Chester. And I'm not going to marry him now or ever, so you might as well resign yourself to that."

"Will you listen to that! You'd think I wanted her to do it for my sake." Elly, forgetting all her resolves to be calm and considerate, turned on Mrs. Hoffman.

"You *do* want me to do it for your sake. You *do*!" she exclaimed, rapidly, her voice rising to an unnatural pitch. "You're always telling me how selfish I am, and how you're doing things for my sake. As a matter of fact, you want me to marry Chester Adelstein to gratify your own ambitions. Because you think his family is important and you want to get in their set and brag to your friends about what a fine match your daughter made. And because you're a thoroughly selfish woman! You want me to marry him so you can be happy, and you don't give a damn whether I'd be happy or not. Oh!" Her voice broke and she burst into hysterical sobs. Mrs. Hoffman's tears and wailing followed immediately after.

"How can a girl talk that way to her own mother?" she asked. "Milton, can't you do something with her? She'll bring me to my grave."

"Cut it out, both of you!" Mr. Hoffman assumed command. "Elly, go into the bathroom and wash your face. Laura, control yourself! You're behaving like a fool. Can't a man get a little peace and quiet in his own house? After all, you know, I do live here." Obediently Eleanor

went to the bathroom to wash her face, and obediently Mrs. Hoffman attempted to control herself, her plump pink face working grotesquely with the effort. Elly came back to the living room, her tears dried and the sobs swallowed. She spoke very slowly, measuredly, trying desperately not to lose control.

"Father," she said haltingly, "you'll never have peace and quiet as long as mother and I live together. We just can't be together without fighting. She wants to own me—believes she has the divine right. I won't be owned. If I happened to have the same ideas as she has, everything would be fine. But I haven't. I'm willing for her to have any ideas she likes, as long as she doesn't force them on me. But she isn't willing for me to have any ideas other than hers, or for me to act in any way other than the way she dictates. She does it to you; she's been tyrannizing over you ever since you were married, and she did it to Muriel. Well, you stood for it. After all, you selected her, so you sort of had to put up with it. But I didn't select her. She was wished on me. And I won't be owned!" Her mother gasped and made a violent effort to interrupt, but the girl was started now, and the torrent of her words, held back for so long, could not be stemmed. Her pace increased rapidly, and her voice trembled, but she held her tears in check.

"You needn't tell me I'm selfish or inconsiderate or any of those things," she went on. "I'll grant that. I'll grant anything you care to say. But whatever I am, it makes no difference. I'm at the place where I'm fighting for my life. I won't be forced into marrying Chester Adelstein, I won't be nagged into it. Peace at any price may be your motto, but it isn't mine. You're a coward,

you're afraid of her. I'm not. There's only one way for you to have peace and quiet in your own home and that's for me to leave it, and I'm going to, just as soon as I can find another place."

"Oh, I've heard that before," her mother said with a sneer. "You can't scare me with that. If you think you can get along so well that way why don't you try it? I've always told you if you didn't like it here you could move. How about your swell artistic friends? Why don't you go and live with them? See what they'll do for you when you put them to the test. I suppose you think that just because you've earned a few measly dollars a week, you can be as independent as you like. Well, I'd like to see. You haven't exactly set the Hudson River on fire yet. Go ahead; try living on what you earn yourself and see how you get along. Maybe your *shicksas* from Washington society will support you. Go on. Yah!" The girl's face was deathly pale. Her eyes were blazing yellow lights, and she was trembling violently.

"All right," she said, "I'll call your bluff. I'll ask them right now." She turned, walked slowly down the hall to the library, closed the door, and in a low voice, called Eva's number. Luckily, Eva was home.

"Eve," she breathed into the phone, "I've done it! Can I come down—right away? I'll explain later."

"Sure, come right along. You won't even have to sleep on the couch. Bobbie's away and you can have her bed."

"All right, I'll hurry. Be down in about an hour. I can't say anything more now." She went to her room, and rather slowly and methodically began to put things into her suitcase. All the underwear she could find, her

serge street dress, her yellow chiffon evening dress, her georgette blouses for the suit she was wearing.

She went through her dressing table drawer and carefully gathered such little trinkets as she thought she'd need. A bar pin, a set of cuff pins, a pair of links; her linen handkerchief case. She found the pitiful little bulk of Ted's letters from France, frayed and dirty, held together, not with the traditional pink ribbon, but with a rubber band.

"You always said I'd do it," she said, mutely addressing the writer of the letters. Even now, in the height of this situation, her omnipresent awareness triumphed over her sense of the dramatic, and she couldn't speak aloud to the letters. She looked at them gravely for a moment, then put them in the bag with the other things. She made a swift survey of the room, to make sure that she had everything she wanted. Then she put on her hat and coat, left the bag in the hall and went back into the living room.

"Good-by," she said quietly. "I'm going now." Her father looked surprised. Her mother incredulous.

"Nonsense," Mr. Hoffman said, "you're not doing anything of the kind. Where did you think you were going?"

"To my artistic friends," Elly replied, mimicing her mother's contemptuous tone. "They're quite willing to take me in for as long as I care to stay." Something in the dead level tone of her voice seemed to convince them that she meant it.

"Oh, God!" Mrs. Hoffman shrieked, her pink face red with emotion, "she isn't really going. She couldn't. To leave her poor mother that way. Oh, Elly, darling," her face working absurdly, as it always did when she was

under the stress of strong feeling, "I didn't mean it. I just lost my temper. Please stay, and I'll never try to make you do anything you don't want to again. I promise. Elly!" The girl stood quite motionless, looking disdainfully at her mother. If she only knew, thought Elly, how awful she looked when she did that, she'd stop.

"No," she said. "I'm going, really. There's no use getting excited about it. We've fooled and fought long enough, and I'm sure we'll all be better off if I'm away. Good-by! When you're calmer I'll meet you both somewhere, or come up, and we can talk over the details. I'd rather separate amicably, but that's altogether up to you." Again she turned and walked slowly down the hall. With a wild shriek, Mrs. Hoffman followed her, dropping to her knees on the floor, and clasping Elly around the legs as she bent to pick up her bag.

"Darling," she screamed, as Elly tried to loosen her arms, "don't break your poor mother's heart. Think of the disgrace. What will all my friends say? Oh, God, make her heart a little softer. It's like a stone." Strange, thought Elly, standing there, trying to disengage herself, how it all was turning out. And how flinty she was being about it. The wild appeals only helped to crystallize her determination. It was easy. She felt no kinship to this groveling, sniffing, hysterical woman on the floor. A little contemptuous sympathy, but that was all. The quiet exaltation of her mood carried her over any lesser feeling. She was getting away. She was saving the life of her soul. What did anything else matter? She felt equal to any fireworks.

"Oh, cut out the drama," she said in a hard little voice. "And good-by. I'll call you up to-morrow." With a wrench she managed to get away and made a rush for the

door. As she rang for the elevator her mother opened the door and made one last outcry.

"Elly," she called, "come back." There was no answer. Not waiting for the car, Eleanor flew down the stairs to the street, and entered into her new estate. The scene above was blotted temporarily from her mind. There was nothing in it but one word.

Free . . . free . . . free . . . free. It sang in her ears. Every footstep made her freer. How easy the one step had been. It was the long approach that had been hard. But she'd lived toward it, and when the moment had come she had been ready. The struggles ahead did not occur to her then. Anyway, nothing could be quite so hard any more. The most difficult thing was accomplished.

She was free now. The rest would be to keep free.

She wanted to take a taxi down, but a sudden spirit of economy possessed her; if she were to be altogether on her own now, she must be careful about money. So she got on a bus instead, and climbed to the top. It was a night for bus lovers—nearly every seat was occupied by spooning, oblivious couples, but Elly scarcely saw them. In her mind there was room for only one thing. How simple it had been. How easy. After all these months—years really—of planning, and wondering, and fearing. And then all of a sudden it happened. Why, two hours ago she hadn't even dreamed of it.

Eva was alone when Elly arrived.

"There were some people here," she said, "but I got rid of them. I knew you'd want to be alone. Well! How did you do it? You never gave me the slightest warning."

"I didn't have the slightest warning myself," Elly told her, smiling tremulously. "Some little thing came up, I

don't even remember what, and it just happened. You know what it was like? Just exactly like blowing and blowing on a balloon. You keep on blowing to make it bigger, and you know it's going to burst, but you keep on, anyway, you can't stop, sort of, and then all of a sudden, pf! it's exploded. That's me." Eva smiled indulgently.

"I always knew you'd do it, eventually. It's the best thing for you. Do you think you'll have the guts to stick it out? You know, they'll exert all kinds of pressure on you to make you come back. It is rather hard on your mother, coming right now. Your sister isn't even back from her honeymoon yet, is she?"

"No," said Elly. "That's what started it. She began moaning about Muriel, and we got into a row. It was a swell row, Eve. And you'd have been proud of me. I didn't cry at all, hardly."

"Didn't she make an awful fuss?"

"Yes, of course. But she said all the wrong things. She said, 'What will my friends think?' And, honestly, Eva, I think that's all she really cares about. It's not that she'll miss me so much. Gee, if I'd come and told her I was going to get married to Chester Adelstein she'd have been squealing with delight. But this is against the law of the tribe. That's the only thing she's worrying about."

"You're a little hard on her," Eva said gently. "That's part of it, of course, but she really does love you, even if she has a funny way of showing it." Elly looked at her queerly.

"Are you going to get mushy now?" she asked.

"No, only I couldn't help thinking how hard it'll be for her, with both of you gone at the same time. Now we'd

better get right down to facts. I don't suppose you've any special plans."

"No, it all happened too suddenly. I didn't think of anything else but getting away. And she taunted me. About you. She said you wouldn't help me."

"That was only natural. You knew I would, though."

"Of course. What do you think I should do?"

"Well, you can stay here until you're altogether settled. The first month will be the hardest. If you can stick that out you'll be safe. Exactly how much money have you?"

"At the moment I have about twenty dollars a week. Fifteen from the Klein work—that's steady, and Bradley gives me other odd jobs to do every once in a while, but I can't count more than an average of five a week from that. But you know on June 10th I'll be twenty-one, and I'll inherit some money from my grandmother. I don't know how much, but it's quite a bit, I think, because my father invested it or something and it's been compounding since I was a little girl. My grandmother died when I was four. Isn't it lucky for me she didn't leave it in trust until I married? Anyway, it'll be enough to pay rent somewhere, and a bit over. And they can't stop me from getting it, either."

"Well, then, you stay here until you get that money. In the meantime we can be looking around for a place. Your money from Bradley will be enough to take care of food and incidentals. You don't need any clothes, do you?"

"No. Not if I can get the rest of my stuff from uptown. I'm afraid to go up, though. I might never get out again."

"You could go up sometime when there's no one home,"

Eva suggested. "That would be better for both of you. Now I think you'd better go to bed. You're pretty tired; and you have a few pretty hard days ahead of you." The phone rang as they talked. Elly looked at it apprehensively as Eva went to answer.

"If it's my father, say I'm asleep." It was Mr. Hoffman, sounding grave and considerably shaken.

"I don't think he believed me," Eva said, after she had hung up, "but he seemed a little relieved not to have to speak to you. He wants you to call him in the morning."

"Home?"

"No. At his office."

4

She awoke in the morning with a sense of impending doom. It was the telephone call. She hated the idea, but it must be done. Some contact with the family would have to be established, and she might as well do it right away and as casually as possible.

"If I act as though nothing much has happened, maybe they'll act the same way," she said to Eva over the breakfast coffee, then added, "swell chance!"

She waited until ten o'clock, and called her father's office. He said very little, explaining that he couldn't talk freely from there, and asked her to come downtown at noon.

"We'll go to lunch together, and thrash the matter out," he said. She tried to gauge his attitude from his voice; he sounded most of all grave, a little hurt, too. But she thought she could detect a tiny note of sympathy which he couldn't quite down, although he was trying.

When they met in his office they were both rather white and nervous. Nothing was said until they got outside.

No use letting the stenographer in on the whole thing. Those people talk so much.

When he finally did get around to it, his manner was quite conversational.

"How long do you think you'll have to stay away before your discipline becomes effective?" he asked.

"It isn't discipline," Elly said. "And I'm not coming back. There's no use pretending to humor me and thinking you can get me to follow you home like a baby after a rattle. I'd rather be separated on a friendly basis, but that, of course, is up to you and mother. If it means coming back home and being forgiven or never darkening your doors again, why, I'll never darken them, that's all. It's quite simple." Her father looked at her in wonder. His lips smiled, but his eyes were hurt.

"I never dreamed you had it in you to be so hard," he said. "You haven't even asked about your poor mother. Oh, it was a cruel thing you did last night. And at this time, too. Why, you've ruined her whole joy in Muriel's marriage."

"I'm sorry," Elly said. "But I didn't do it purposely. It just did itself. And now that it has happened there's no sense deceiving ourselves, and thinking that everything would be miraculously straightened out if I went home. Oh, of course, she'd be all right for a couple of weeks, and so would I, but as soon as the first fright wore off she'd begin pestering me and I'd begin resenting it, and the whole thing would start all over again. Nope. I'm out for good. So anything you want to take up with me you'd better take up on that basis. Shall we be friends or enemies?"

"Of course, we'll be friends, my dear. I quite understand your attitude. I'm terribly sorry you feel so

strongly on the subject that you can't manage to wait a little longer. You know, you might marry"—she made an impatient gesture—"and then you could get away and make her happy, too."

Elly's shoulders sagged.

"Oh," she said, "do I have to go over all that again! I don't want to get married. I want to be alone, to belong to myself. For a little while, anyway. I don't want to share myself with anyone in the whole world. It's such a small thing to want, and so simple. Is it so unnatural that you simply can't get what I mean?"

"You'll admit it's not like most girls. Now, if you were intent upon a career, I could understand, but you evidently aren't. Your career seems to be quite incidental to this curious idea of yours."

"It is," she said eagerly, "it is, altogether. It's only a means to an end. But, I'll tell you, if you want to emphasize that part of it to mother, you can. Explain to her that I need a place of my own to work in. The thing she seems most concerned about is what her friends will say, and it will be easier for them to swallow if she tells them about my career. But I don't want you to be under any misapprehension. I'm not leaving home because of my career. I'm not leaving home for any of the reasons that girls are supposed to leave home. I'm leaving for one very simple reason. I want to. I want to be by myself, to belong to myself, to be answerable to no one but myself. It's all so simple and obvious; I suppose that's why it's hard for you to understand."

"You're sure," Mr. Hoffman said gingerly—"please don't be angry now, but are you sure there's no man involved? Your mother thought maybe there was someone you didn't want to tell us about, even someone you were

secretly married to, perhaps." Elly's eyes filled with tears.

"Oh, it's just no use," she said wearily. "I always fool myself into thinking I can count on you. But you're just like the rest. You only seem different. No, there's no man. You can tell her that with perfect safety."

"What are your plans?" he asked, after a long pause, during which he seemed to have convinced himself that the girl was in earnest.

"I'm staying with Eva until June. When I get grandma's money I'll find a place of my own. By the way, how much will it be?"

"If you leave it where it is," he replied, "you'll get about twenty-five dollars a week."

"That's fine. And it's absolutely mine on my birthday, isn't it? You can't stop me from getting it?" He smiled ruefully.

"No. Would that make a difference?"

"Nope. Of course it'll be easier for me, with twenty-five dollars a week I don't have to work for, but I'd do it, anyway. Look, I have forty-five I can definitely count on right away. And when I leave school Mr. Bradley will give me more work. I'll get along all right."

"Oh, have you decided to forego my allowance?"

"Yes. I don't want to be under obligations to you. I wouldn't mind accepting the money—I know you can afford it. But taking it would give you a moral hold on me, and I don't want that."

"Well," sighed Mr. Hoffman, "all I can say is Shakespeare was right."

"What do you mean?"

"'It's a wise father that knows his own child.'"

5

Eva, as usual, was right. The first month was the hardest. A dozen times during the course of that month she was on the verge of going back. The first time she went home for dinner after her departure, was a repetition of that night's happenings. Frantic pleas, agonized wailings, extravagant promises. Threats of suicide, too. Elly weakened. It wasn't that she was moved to sympathy so much as that she couldn't bear scenes, and was tempted to give in so the scene would stop.

But she didn't. Something came to her in time, and reminded her of how many scenes there would be forever after, if she went back now. And she could never leave again, either. There was something so anticlimatic about a second dramatic exit. It would lack conviction. So she didn't yield. Instead, she spoke firmly, telling her mother that she couldn't come at all if this was going to be the result.

"I didn't come because I was particularly anxious to, you know," she said brutally, "I only came because father said you wanted to see me."

"I do. I want to see you all the time. I miss you so much. I can't sleep at night. I met Celia Katz on the street yesterday; she looked at me so funny! I'm ashamed to go anywhere; I can't look people in the face. You're disgracing me."

There were innumerable repetitions and variations of this during those first few weeks. When the haranguing of her mother seemed in vain, and the pleading of her father failed, emissaries were sent to reason with her. Aunt Rose, the one relative she really cared for, took her to tea and urged her to be reasonable.

"Your attitude is so selfish," Aunt Rose pointed out. "You're not only making your mother miserable, but you're hurting your father as well. And Muriel will be back from her honeymoon in a few days. Think what all this will mean to her." But Eleanor was adamant.

"I've thought of all those things," she said, "and I'm sorry. It's more than selfishness, though. It's self-preservation. I'm not going back."

Then, when Muriel got home there was a fresh onslaught. She was shocked and Irving was furious. He felt that it cast a blot upon his wife's name.

"You can't go through with this thing," he told her. "It's impossible for you to be so utterly inconsiderate of others. Think what this thing means to Muriel. Just starting her married life. What will she say to all the people who know both of you? Can't you see the position you're putting her in? Why, my parents don't know what to make of it."

"I can see how you feel," she told him, "but after all, I'm doing nothing disgraceful. You all act as though you think I'd left home to lead a life of shame! Muriel knows what it would mean for me to stay up there. It was bad enough while she was with me; but alone it would simply be intolerable. You know, don't you?" She looked pleadingly at Muriel. Muriel hesitated. Poor youngster, it was a pretty hard spot for her. Irving answered for her.

"It makes no difference whether she understands or not. You are doing a very questionable thing, and neither I nor my wife are going to sanction it. As long as you insist upon being stubborn about it you will not be welcome in our house."

"Is that right, Muriel?" Muriel, crying, said nothing. It was almost as bad, in the beginning, as though she

hadn't gained her freedom at all. She learned in those early weeks, that liberty wasn't a very simple possession, but something very difficult, hedged about with all kinds of prickly things. Still, it was precious. And she wasn't going to give it up.

"Why should I?" she asked Eva. "Not one of them really gives a damn about me. All they can think about is 'what will people say?' Like a lot of sheep. If they exhibited one decent instinct about the whole business, I might be tempted to yield. But they don't, so I won't. It's getting pretty tiresome, though."

"It won't last much longer," Eva assured her. "When they realize there's no use they'll lay off you. You'll see."

6

She did see. By June her rebellion was accepted as a fact—painful, but immutable. The family tried to keep from friends and acquaintances the fact that Elly was actually living way from home, but they admitted with a sort of grudging pride that she was sharing the studio of another girl artist. By then Mrs. Hoffman had given up pleading with her to come back home to live, and pleaded only for her to come up for dinner more often.

Her father and Aunt Rose were compelled to admit how much better she looked, how the harassed expression she had worn so continuously of late began to give way to one of peace. Even Irving decided that it would look better if the family seemed to be standing with her. Then nobody could think there was anything really terrible about it. Muriel was awfully happy at his decision; she loved him, but she loved Elly, too, and understood exactly how she felt.

On her birthday Elly signed some papers, the meaning of which was not particularly clear to her. All she knew was that now she was in possession of grandma's money. With this fund and some two hundred odd dollars to her credit in a savings bank, she opened a checking account.

"It'll be easier that way," she told Eva, "especially if I have to pay rent and electric bills and all that sort of thing. And it makes me feel much more a person."

"You're really an awful baby, you know," Eva told her. "But I know just how you feel."

They went "house hunting" one glorious, warm Sunday afternoon, a perfect June day. Eva had told her she might stay on at the apartment over the summer, as Bobbie would be away until September, but Elly wanted the first full flavor of her freedom unshared, even with the most understanding friend. They found the place rather easily. It was a single large room, on the top floor of an old, rather sketchily remodeled house. It was a terrific climb. The room was awfully dirty and the floor not particularly good, nor the woodwork. And when you rented a place in the summer you never could tell about the heat. Those were its disadvantages. But its advantages more than compensated. There was a decent bathroom, which in time could be made clean. And there was a stone fireplace. And there were two windows which not only faced south, but which looked out upon one of the few trees still growing on a city street in the eastern part of the United States. And the rent was sixty dollars a month.

CHAPTER XV

I

THE early weeks in the place—Eleanor never got to call it anything but the place, studio sounded so pretentious—were the happiest of her life. The first violent disapproval of the family lightened, and her own process of readjustment somewhat eased by her stay with Eva, Elly entered her life alone with a joy that she had not believed possible in the world. Her happiness was so strong a thing that it was almost palpable. Sometimes, sitting in the wicker armchair, surreptitiously given her by Aunt Rose, with her feet before her on the drawing stand, she would catch herself stretching out her hand, foolishly, in an attempt to touch the happiness. It was heavy about her, she immersed herself in it as though it were a warm, fragrant bath. All sorts of absurd figures came to her mind; she couldn't help laughing at herself.

"I'm getting positively balmy," she told Eva one day. "If this keeps up I'll even begin to like poetry."

"Little barbarian!" Eva was delighted with the result of the experiment. "You really look much better already. You're losing that haggard expression."

"Why shouldn't I? I'm so happy! So simply ecstatic. I wish I were a writer, so I could put down what happens to me every time I go into that room and realize that everything else in the whole world is shut outside. Or I wish I were a real painter. It would be bound to show in my work. I don't believe these people who say that artists do their best work when they're miserable. Some might,

but I'll bet more of them can do better things when they're happy."

Although she didn't pay any particular attention to it, her own work did improve quite perceptibly. Being alone so much—she was jealous of her solitude, and at first she couldn't bear to have anyone come to the place—she instinctively turned to work, and did some things which interested Paul Bradley deeply.

"These are great," he said to her one morning when she brought him three delicately made pen and ink sketches for some lingerie posters, "I had a hunch you had it in you. But I didn't think it would come out so soon. What's happened? Are you in love? You look as though you had some happy secret." Elly blushed. Was it so apparent, she marveled? Well, she remembered what it was like to be in love, and certainly it had never made her so blissful.

2

This spirit of almost delirious joy came to an end eventually, of course. With September and the slight reddening of the leaves on the tree outside her windows, her feeling resolved itself down to a steady, deep kind of happiness, the sort of thing that is supposed to come to perfectly mated couples after the first wild thrill of belonging to each other has passed. She didn't love her solitude any less, but she loved it more reasonably. She was sure of it now, and willing to share it a little with her friends. It wasn't necessary to hug it quite so close any more.

The family was rather surprised to find that when the first glamor wore off, she didn't come trotting back home and beg to be taken in. She'd get tired of it, Mr. Hoffman had told his wife. She could never stand the loneli-

ness. Wait, you'll see, she'll walk in some fine day, bag and baggage. It was just as well to let her have her taste of it now. Save a lot of trouble later on to some man, probably.

Only she didn't get tired of it. Mr. Hoffman didn't understand that being alone doesn't necessarily mean being lonely.

Gradually she swung back into her old course. The parties at Eva's began again. The same old boys and girls, with occasionally one or two new ones. Hank Wells, still grumbling about his newspaper job, and still hanging tightly on to it, Dick Barclay and his pretty young wife, quarreling a little more bitterly than they had formerly, Billy Tracy and Tom Berry, Bobbie who was letting her yellow hair grow, because too many girls were cutting theirs, Bud Lane, tanner of cheek and bluer of eyes than ever, from days of golf and riding. Bud, who'd won an honorary degree when he went into the war, emerged from the fray a first lieutenant, and now was "doing something in a bank," Elly didn't know exactly what it was, except that it wasn't behind a cage anywhere in view. Whatever it was, he was doing it well, evidently, and happily too.

The first time they met again at Eva's Elly and Bud were drawn together by the same attraction that had caught them when they first met.

"You're more beautiful than ever," Bud said. "You're handsomer than ever, too," she told him, feeling a little foolish. Banter, she thought ruefully, was not in her line. That was why she had to be honest, she never could think of bright things to say. But in a few minutes they'd dropped easily back into their old relations, and when it came time to go home it was assumed by both that Bud would take her.

They picked up their friendship there where they had left it three years earlier. Each got from the other a mild exhilaration. Bud, being a volatile and articulate young person, found it very easy to say "I love you" on rather frequent occasions, and Elly, being inarticulate, found it difficult to answer, so she smiled and said nothing. However, she liked to hear him say it, and was in no way deluded into thinking that he actually did love her. It was funny, she thought, how easily it slipped from his lips. As easily as the kisses that came so gently, and about as pleasant and meaningless.

Sometimes he grew a little restless and demanded to be kissed in return.

"Don't you like me to kiss you?" he would ask a little sulkily. "I don't have to, you know." She would tell him yes, and she did like him to.

"I let you, don't I? If I didn't like it I wouldn't have it."

"Well, why don't you ever show any interest in the proceedings? Why don't you kiss me once in a while?"

"I don't know how."

"How silly. You don't want to."

"Same thing. If I wanted to, I guess I'd know how, wouldn't I? I've really never kissed anybody, although loads of people have kissed me. I don't know. I'm just not much interested, that's all."

"You're a funny girl," Bud mused. "You're twenty-one, and you seem just as unpracticed now as you did that night I first met you. Remember?"

Yes, she remembered. And she was unpracticed, still. A tiny pain came around her heart when the picture of Ted flashed suddenly across her mind. If he had lived.

. . . Even he used to scold her, too, because she never would kiss him.

"I guess," Bud said speculatively, "I guess you're undersexed. Or else you haven't been awakened yet." His timeworn comments elicited no smile from Eleanor.

"I guess I am," she answered seriously.

Academically, she was deeply interested in the subject, a subject which seemed these days to be of primary concern to all the people she knew. At parties they always separated into little groups, and, somehow, no matter what the original topic of their conversation might be, it got around, eventually, to sex. The word no longer made Elly wince the way it had a few years earlier. She could say it glibly now, without thinking at all. But her interest was altogether an academic one. In her casual contacts with men, and these contacts were many enough, she had never once been disturbed at all. When men made love to her, which they did with a fair degree of regularity, she rather liked it. There was often a kind of æsthetic pleasure in it, if they did it well. But never was there anything disturbing in it.

And she felt no curiosity, either. Curiosity, it appeared from a great many novels about the *Modern Girl*, was accountable for the decline of virginity in America. They wanted to know, according to the novels, which were frequently written by men, what it was all about. These novels Elly found unconvincing. She couldn't believe that girls could give themselves so casually to men just because they wanted to know what it was all about. They must be actuated by love. Or something that passed for love, anyway.

All the stuff, spoken and written, about the *Modern Girl*—the *Younger Generation*—official titles—seemed to Elly

altogether fictional in character. She belonged to the younger generation, she was a modern girl. All her friends were of the age, too. And of them all she couldn't find one who did any of the things attributed to them. She didn't know, for instance, one girl who checked her corsets at dances, and yet, according to novels and stories in the Sunday supplements that was a common practice. As a matter of fact, very few girls wore corsets, but those who did kept them on. She knew no one either, who talked in terms of "petting parties" and the rest of the current vocabularily used in the best fiction stories. Of course people kissed each other and made love to each other, but there didn't seem to be anything new in that. Elly, puzzling over the whole matter, finally came to the conclusion that the *Younger Generation*, as such, had been invented by a middle-aged woman who wrote Sunday stories for a New York paper, and who had seized upon that as an easy way of earning the money to put her two children through college. Elly, being altogether of the earth, never believed in what she couldn't see, and she had absolutely no evidence of the *Younger Generation*.

As for herself, she wanted only one thing, and that was to be let alone. To do her work, to see her friends, to avoid quarrels, to shut herself in her attic room and lock the whole world out. To be free. That was all she wanted. Sex, well she was awfully glad she wasn't bothered with anything like that, because that would most certainly interfere with being free.

3

Life grew increasingly simple for her. Of course, there were still times when the family got together, and, with a concerted effort, tried to win her back home. But it was

really awfully easy to resist them. She hit upon a plan that got the best results for her with the least effort. She assumed an attitude of stolidity and slight stupidity. When they began their attacks she would take a position and keep it throughout the entire discussion. Her answer to every question would be the same. Her defense consisted of a constant reiteration of her determination to continue as she was. She never got excited, and she never bothered to explain. Her manner was gentle and patient, as though she were trying to teach something to a dog or a baby. The family found it quite disheartening, and their attempts came with less and less frequency. By November they had given it up altogether, and appeared resigned to the inevitable. Their efforts now were concentrated upon getting her to visit them more often. Mrs. Hoffman would try to tempt her by calling up and announcing that she would have certain favorite dishes for dinner—wouldn't Elly come up? She found it all very amusing, and took a rather malicious delight in teasing about it.

By Christmas she was so far forgiven that her mother gave her a set of new curtains and hangings for the place, and suggested to Mr. Hoffman that he give her a daybed, so she could get rid of the rather rickety couch she'd been using. Even Muriel and Irving gave her something for the room—two low book shelves that fitted into the wall just below the windows and were cushioned on top to make window seats. They were built under the special direction of Mrs. Hoffman, who, in fact, supervised the whole proceedings, and who spent many hours in the place.

"I'll have to be careful," Elly told Eva Gerrard one day, shortly before Christmas. "If they forgive me too

completely it'll be almost as bad as living uptown. How hard you have to work just to belong to yourself. If you relax just a tiny bit you lose an awful lot of ground."

Pretty soon, though, the attention of her parents, of her mother, in particular, was diverted, as it had been before, by Muriel. Shortly after Christmas it became known, sifting out in a furtive sort of way, that Muriel was in what her mother called an interesting condition.

"Interesting to whom?" Elly asked when her mother told her, and then added hastily, "oh, I'm sorry. I just said that to be smart. I'm awfully interested myself, honestly."

So once again Muriel came unwittingly to the rescue, and Elly was allowed to follow her own devices without much concern on the part of her mother.

Her own devices were commonplace enough. She led a perfectly regular, quite unexciting existence. Mornings found her in Paul Bradley's office, turning out routine stuff. Afternoons she would usually spend in the place, working on a poster idea she was developing. It was a simple enough thing, but nobody apparently had thought of trying it. She worked with silhouettes, only, instead of the usual arrangement, she cut the figures out of white and applied them on a black background. The result was startling and amazingly effective. The white figures somehow gave much more the feeling of life than the ordinary black silhouettes did.

Her evenings were more or less alike, too. Dinner at the little coffee house with the gang, occasional dressed-up parties with Bud Lane, dates once a week or thereabouts with Hank Wells, who always managed to graft theater seats through the dramatic editor of *The Star*. Elly went to the theater a great deal, particularly to those things

where costumes and settings were of real importance. She had never given up her desire to design for the theater, and was only waiting for the time when Paul Bradley should think she was good enough to go ahead. Meanwhile, she spent three or four nights a week at the theater, and absorbed everything she could find in the way of line and color. And she kept on working on her white silhouettes until one day she finished a set of them that seemed good enough to show Mr. Bradley.

"Do you think I can do anything with these?" she asked him.

"Great guns, kid," he replied, "if you work it right you have a gold mine in that idea. For posters they're great, and you could work out some good revue sets, too. Have you shown this stuff to anyone else?"

"No. I wanted you to see it first."

"Well, take it around to Princeley. He'll fall for it, sure. And if you once get started doing work for the Kalbfleisch outfit, you're made. Everyone else'll come tearing after you." Pleased, but not counting too heavily on his prediction, Elly got Morgan Princeley on the telephone.

"Certainly," he said. "Come right around. I've always got time to see a pretty, clever girl like you." Half an hour later she was in the Kalbfleisch reception room. He kept her waiting for twenty minutes or more after she had sent her name in.

"No casting today, you know," the guardian of the gate told her superciliously. Elly explained that she wasn't looking for a part, and immediately the boy's attitude became subtly more respectful. He grew communicative, too, when he learned that she wasn't an actress, or a potential actress, and was in the midst of a lengthy dis-

sertation upon the pestiferousness of young women in search of work on the stage, when a hard-faced, very yellow blonde, tripped down the hall from Princeley's office. It wasn't the same one Elly had seen on her first visit, but it was one exactly like her. There seemed, she learned later, to be hundreds of hard-faced, very yellow blondes, all cut out of the same pattern, forever tripping in and out of Morgan Princeley's office.

The guardian of the gate smiled at Elly, as one regular guy to another.

"You kin go in now," he said.

Morgan Princeley was signing a letter when she came in. He read the letter through before he looked up.

"Hello," said Eleanor. "I want to show you some new pictures Mr. Bradley thought you'd be interested in." She wasn't afraid now, to get right to the point. The months she'd been working and living alone had given her a new confidence.

"Getting very businesslike, aren't you, baby?" Princeley said. "Well, that's all right with me. Trot 'em out." He went through the set of silhouettes several times, studying them intently, without saying a word. Elly looked at him, trying to read his face. At length he looked up.

"Very interesting," he said. "I shouldn't be at all surprise if we could use some of this stuff. I'll have to give 'em to Blackburn, our art director; he has the real authority on all this end of the business. He's out now, can you leave 'em here? It'll be perfectly all right. We confine our gyping to actors." He grinned. "You're not afraid of papa, are you, pretty baby? Got a little kiss for him, just to show you trust him? No? Well, have it your own way, it's all the same to me." He looked down at the

papers on his desk, picked out an unsigned letter, and began scratching his pen across its surface.

"Leave the door open when you go out," he said.

4

Blackburn, the Kalbfleisch art director, did like the silhouettes, it developed within the week, and a few days later Elly was put to work making a set of six posters for the new revue, *Frocks and Blondes*, which Kalbfleisch was putting into his newly redecorated Metropole Theater. The posters were to be mounted in niches along the façade of the house, and would occupy an extraordinarily prominent position. She was to get three hundred dollars for the set.

"That's great luck for a beginner," Morgan Princeley told her. "You just stick with us and you'll be all right. Blackburn thinks you're great, and he'll give you other work to do right along." Now every evening and as many afternoons as possible found Elly huddled in a seat near the back of the Metropole orchestra. She was to do two studies of Diane Duval, the French star of the revue, two of the comedians, and two of the chorus.

One afternoon while she was sitting in the theater, making a preliminary sketch of Mlle. Duval, Morgan Princeley came up to her with a tall, lanky youth whom he introduced as Nat Harris, the press agent of the show.

"Glad to know you, Miss Hoffman," he said. "I was just saying to Morgan that it would be a good stunt to get you photographed in a smock working on one of your sketches. I could land that in the rotos. They always fall for these artistic pictures. And Weiss, around the corner, has one of the best prop smocks you ever saw.

Looks like the spirit of Greenwich Village. How about it? All right with you?"

"Certainly," Elly replied, "if Mr. Princeley is satisfied."

"Yeh," Harris assured her, "he don't care. And the papers are beginning to squawk already 'cause I've been shooting 'em so much stuff on Duval."

Three weeks later Mrs. Hoffman was carrying around with her a much rumpled pair of rotogravure clippings, one each from *The Herald* and *The World*, showing Elly in the smock, which was opened carelessly at the throat, working on a sketch of Diane Duval. "Miss Eleanor Hoffman," the captions said in effect, "beautiful young New York artist, who was discovered by Morgan Princeley, major domo of the Kalbfleisch offices, at work on one of the posters she is making for the forthcoming revue, *Frocks and Blondes*. Miss Hoffman has been offered a place in the chorus of the new show, but declared she'd rather remain on the other side of the footlights."

For the first time in weeks Eleanor displaced Muriel in their mother's mind. After all, practically any woman can have a baby, but comparatively few women get their pictures into the Sunday picture sections, as the discoveries of famous theatrical producers. Mrs. Hoffman beamed with pride and delight when acquaintances mentioned having seen the pictures, and in case anyone hadn't, she brought them out at once.

"She was always the clever one of the family," Mrs. Hoffman would say to her interested friends. "And determined to be an artist. You never saw such will power in your life. She got it from me. . . ."

"Oh, certainly she has a studio. Down town near the theatrical district. She has to be near her work. And, anyway, you know how artists can't work at home, with

the family around all the time. They have to be left alone. . . .

"Yes, she stays down there most of the time. She can't bear traveling on the trains. She never was very strong, and she has to save herself for her work. . . .

"No, indeed, I'm not nervous. I trust her implicitly. When she first took the place I worried a little, but that's the price you pay for having talented children, I guess. You must come with me some time to see the studio. It's very attractive."

It was amazing, really, how many people saw those pictures. Boys she hadn't heard from in years called her up at the place, getting the number from her mother. Chester Adelstein, who'd discreetly withdrawn when she first left home, wrote a note asking whether she'd have dinner with him. And girls who had looked the other way when she'd passed them on Fifth Avenue, popped up from a great variety of places, all as eager as they could be to see her again, to take her to tea or have her for a dinner party.

"Isn't it the most absurd thing you ever heard of?" she asked Eva. "These people just fled from me as though I had the plague, because I had the guts to do something I really wanted to do. And now because I get a little silly publicity they all come trooping back. They seem to think I'm a good person to know now. You know, I'd understand it if I'd done something big, or become really important. But a little inconsequential thing like this! It's depressing."

She managed to elude most of them, but a feeling of curiosity possessed her about Chester, and she wrote back saying that she would like very much to have dinner with him some time. Meanwhile, she stuck close to her work,

her existence bounded by the place and the Metropole Theater. The pictures in the rotogravure sections had other results besides bringing to life her old acquaintances and giving her mother something to talk about. Three afternoon papers and a feature syndicate asked to interview her, and before long she had joined the ranks of "Miss Blank, when seen in her charming little apartment on East Fifty-first Street, said that she believed emphatically that all girls should have a career. . . ."

And one day Hank Wells called up to say that the editor of the Sunday magazine of *The Star* would like to make a full page reproduction of some of her silhouettes. Reproductions of the *Frocks and Blondes* posters appeared in several of the Sunday dramatic sections the week the show opened. And just as Paul Bradley had predicted, several other theatrical producers offered her work to do. Suddenly, within six weeks after her visit to Morgan Princeley's office with the silhouettes, she was launched.

5

She went to talk it over with Bradley, to ask his advice.

"What do you think I should do?" she said. "I'm really all up in the air. It's all happened so suddenly, I can't believe it. I'll always do whatever work you have for me, because you started me, and I'll never forget it. But should I accept this other stuff, or just tie myself up with the Kalbfleisch office? Morgan Princeley wants me to come to work on a straight salary, not to work for any other producer."

"What's he willing to pay you?"

"Seventy-five. He admits I could make more the other way, but he says it'll be worth the difference to me, be-

cause he'll make me famous within a year. Those are his words, not mine."

"Sounds like him. Well, to tell you the truth, he's probably right. My advice is to go with 'em for a year, on condition that you can do outside work if you have the time, so long as it's not for other theatrical firms. I'll be sorry to lose you, but you go with my blessings. And I'll take you on your word about doing some stuff for me now and then. Just one more thing before you go. For your own sake, please remember that you've been damn lucky. Your work is good, but you know as well as I do that there are dozens of artists just as good who are starving to death, and some who are better and can't get a hearing. You're a clever kid, you know what you want, and you have the distinct advantages of having good looks and a personality that makes people want to help you. The breaks have all been with you, and for the love of God don't queer it by getting a swelled head." Elly smiled.

"I'll try not to," she said. "It probably won't be easy, but I'll make an awful stab at it. I do realize I'm awfully lucky, but just to be on the safe side, if you see me getting swelled headed, let me know."

Following Paul Bradley's advice, Eleanor went to work for the Kalbfleisch organization at a salary of seventy-five dollars a week, with the understanding that she could take on any outside work that did not interfere with her duties there. She was kept very busy, as the Kalbfleisch productions were numerous. Besides making posters she got up several ideas for twenty-four sheets, which were eventually displayed on billboards all over town with her name in large black letters down in the right-hand corner. She adhered strictly to Bradley's advice about signing all her work, and Morgan Princeley gave her full play in this

direction. He was determined to make a reputation for her and gave young Harris instructions to use her in the publicity as often as possible.

When she tried to find out why he took such an interest in her he said it was because he admired her attitude toward life.

"I tried to get you," he said, "when you first came to see me. Not hard, of course, I don't believe in that. But I did try. And while I would have been very glad to have had you for a sweetheart, I was just as glad when you answered me the way you did. And I hope you'll always answer everybody that way. You wanted to belong to yourself, you said. Well, baby, keep on belonging to yourself. You're the only one you can really trust. And if you should ever feel yourself slipping, come to papa. He'll help you get back your balance."

CHAPTER XVI

I

MURIEL's baby was born on the twelfth of June, two days after Elly's twenty-second birthday. The family had hoped it would arrive on the tenth. It would have been cute. But perhaps it was just as well, after all, Mrs. Hoffman said later, because if God forbid anything should ever happen to one of them it would spoil everything for the other. Mrs. Hoffman never used the word die. Whenever she had occasion to speak of the possibility of death she used the same locution, "if God forbid anything should happen." In fact, she seemed unable to call anything that related to death by its right name. When on one occasion she wanted her husband to alter a clause in his will she asked him stumbingly for several evenings, thereafter, whether he had attended to "that matter." She seemed to be afraid that to use the words outright would be to bring them to pass.

The baby was a boy. That was one nice thing about Muriel. She could be absolutely depended upon to do the right thing. No fuss, no trouble, a nice easy birth, free from complications, and a son.

It was rather curious, but the advent of the baby brought Elly closer to her family than she had been since before she went to live alone. She adored him from the very first. She found that she didn't agree at all with the theory that babies are unattractive in their infancy. To her Junior was a fascinating thing from the moment she first saw him, at the age of three hours. She, who had never had time for anything concerning the family,

could be found at Muriel's two or three times a week in the afternoon, utterly absorbed in the baby. She constantly discovered what she insisted were signs of tremendous intelligence, although the nurse, a very scientific person, assured her that it was quite impossible for a child to exhibit any signs of intelligence before it reached the age of three months.

Mrs. Hoffman regarded Eleanor's attitude toward the baby as a hopeful sign. After all, Mrs. Hoffman decided, the maternal instinct was awfully strong, and maybe now that Elly was so crazy about the baby, she'd be more likely to get rid of her foolish notions and settle down. It was lovely that she was so successful, of course, but she would feel happier if she could see both her daughters comfortably settled. One afternoon when she met Elly at Muriel's house, she hinted at what was in her mind. Elly groaned.

"Oh, Lord, mother," she said plaintively, "will I have to stop even this? Of course I'm mad about Junior, but it's because he's such a cute and interesting little human toy, and not because I have any passionate yearnings for motherhood. I thought you were convinced by this time that I know what I'm doing. And I'm not going to marry, either, not Chester Adelstein, if you still have that in the back of your head, or anyone else. So for heaven's sake give up the idea. It won't get you anywhere, and it'll only make things difficult between us if you keep harping on it."

2

During the summer Elly experienced a recurrence of the sharp delight she had first felt in the place. She was one of the rare persons who are pleasantly affected by heat, and the midsummer days, instead of unfitting her for

work, in some strange way exhilarated her, and she turned out some really interesting costume designs for the newest Kalbfleisch musical comedy. She was utterly happy. The life in and around the theater was exactly what she wanted, her idea of a dream come true. Just to be there, to listen to the plans for the new season, to chatter idly with the people who dawdled in and out of the Kalbfleisch offices, to read the script of a new play and hear a discussion of who would be the best person to get for the star part, to be consulted occasionally by the art director on a point of scenic technicality or a matter of lighting, that was heaven. She loved her job, she loved the strange, half mad people who were connected with her job, she loved her mode of living. Life at that moment was as near to perfection as life very well could be, she felt.

Often she would drop into Morgan Princeley's office on an errand, and almost invariably she would remain half an hour or more, talking to him. He liked to make her talk, and never tired of starting her off on her theory of spiritual integrity. There had grown up between them, incidentally, a strong, firm friendship; his attitude was a composition of the comradely and the paternal, with a little of the Pygmalion mixed in. He was intent upon making a personage out of her, and was looking forward to the day when he could point with pride to his handiwork. On her side she was genuinely devoted to him, grateful, admiring, and always a tiny bit amused at the plainly visible scaffolding of his vanity.

Occasionally she went to parties at his studio in a Seventh Avenue apartment house. His parties, like his character, were much more wicked in reputation than in fact. They were gay enough parties, but nothing extraordinary ever happened at them. Morgan managed to gather

around him a pretty interesting assortment of people. He was proud of the fact that he could bring together in his studio the extremes of gay New York life, and Elly was likely to see at one party an eminent playwright, the flapper daughter of an old Knickerbocker family, a vaudeville dancer but lately off the burlesque wheels, a soprano from the Metropolitan Opera House, a popular jazz band leader and a bootlegger queen. His taste in people was as catholic as his taste in house furnishings. Elly gasped with horror at the walls of his living room, which were papered in black and white stripes four inches wide, with robust looking cabbage roses climbing up them from floor to ceiling. Later she gasped with wonder and delight at an exquisite bowl of Chinese glaze, a thousand years old, enshrined as his most cherished possession. It was impossible to reconcile the two things. She couldn't understand how the man who loved that Chinese bowl could bear the horrific wall paper. Or else she couldn't understand how the man who chose the horrific wall paper could be interested in the Chinese bowl. But he was devoted to both. When she asked him about it once he said it must be because he had a compartmental mind, and the wall paper satisfied one compartment, while the bowl satisfied another. He was the same way with his friends. He admired the queen of the bootleggers and the Fifth Avenue flapper with equal fervor, and he delighted in bringing them together and observing the effect each had upon the other. They blended amazingly well, at least at his parties, and the chance to attend one was considered a great opportunity.

3

It was at one of these parties, in August, that Elly met Stephen Sayre. Of course she knew a lot about him. He

had long since attained the distinction of being the only theatrical press agent for whose copy dramatic editors fought. And it was only an inexplicable accident that she hadn't met him long before. He'd been in Princeley's office probably a hundred times since she'd gone to work there. Somehow they'd never run into each other. And it never occurred to Morgan that they didn't know each other.

Elly was sitting on a low stool in a corner of the room, engaged in a lively discussion with Blackburn, the art director, about the third act set for the new Hapgood farce, when she began to notice Stephen Sayre. He'd been in the room probably an hour, but it wasn't until then that he detached himself from the background and took definite form in her eyes. She wondered who he was. There was something vaguely familiar about him, although she was certain she'd never seen him before. Something in the line of his head, perhaps, or the way he waved his hands when he talked, seemed to give her a feeling that he was someone she knew very well. It was puzzling.

"Who's that man over there?" she asked, "the one talking to Sally Hedges? No, not the handsome one, the one with the glasses." Blackburn looked at her in surprise.

"Don't you know him?"

"No, should I?"

"Yeh. That's Steve Sayre."

"Oh, is it? I had no idea he looked like that. I thought he was much older. I love his stuff, don't you?"

"Yop, it's great. Want to meet him?"

"Why, yes," Elly said, "I would like to. Only not now. I mean don't go over and obviously drag him away from Sally." They continued their argument about the third

act set, but Elly found her attention straying now and then across the room to where Sayre was sprawled on a couch, talking with very evident interest to Sally Hedges. Sally was the assistant book editor of *The Sphere*, a brilliant and caustic young woman, who was a living refutation of the tradition that clever women are always homely, and that beautiful women are always stupid. Sally Hedges had a wit as keen as a razor blade and a cupid's bow mouth. She had an M. A. from Radcliffe and a modishly shingled head of pure golden hair. Her prose style and her marcel wave were equally flawless, and her large wondering gray eyes saw everything. The hands that pounded out merciless book reviews on a battered typewriter in *The Sphere* office were small and white. In short, Sally Hedges was a knockout. And she took her fun where she found it. People were beginning to speculate just how soon it would be before Dorothy Valentine, the sweet little wife of Porter Valentine, *The Sphere's* literary critic, would begin to see what was going on between Porter and his young assistant.

Judging by the air of absorption that emanated from Sally and Stephen Sayre, it looked as though Dorothy Valentine would soon have nothing to worry about. But Elly remembered, as she watched them, that Sally always wore that look of absorption when she talked to a man. It was part of her technique. As a matter of fact, the subject that they were discussing with such absorption was what kind of typewriter to get to take the place of Sally's battered one. Stephen was being very emphatic about his favorite make, but across the room Elly couldn't hear what they were saying. Again, though, she was struck by the suggestion in him of someone she knew. It was so fleeting, she could scarcely catch it. And she found

it increasingly irritating. She must find out what it was.

"Oh, I say," she said to Blackburn, "Sally's had him long enough. Go over and get him now. I want to ask him something."

He rose, walked over to the couch where Sayre and Sally were seated, and after a few desultory words, returned to the corner with Stephen.

"Sayre," he said by way of introduction, "Miss Hoffman, my assistant, says you've never met, and that seems to me a condition that should be remedied."

"Eleanor Hoffman?" he asked, as though the name were not new to him. She nodded. "I know your work. Think it's darn good, too."

"Well, then, we certainly should know each other," Eleanor said, "'cause I think your work is a lot more than darn good. That parody last Sunday was wonderful, really. You're almost the first thing I read in *The Sphere* on Sundays."

"Do you like it? I always feel as if I were getting away with murder—a press agent running a column in a Sunday paper! And they pay me for it."

"Why not?" asked Blackburn. "They ought to pay you for your press yarns, too. Why, you've made a great figure out of that fat little boss of yours. I wish we had you in our publicity department." Kalbfleisch's wasn't the only theatrical office that yearned to get Stephen Sayre away from Mike Strauss. For Sayre had succeeded, after five years of brilliant work, in establishing the fat, good-natured little Russian Jew he worked for, as a humorous tradition equalled by nobody in New York. The comments on any theatrical situation attributed to Mike Strauss by Stephen Sayre were always given the best space in the Sunday dramatic sections, and were the

only press agent stories read by anybody but the press agents who wrote them.

"You know, it's funny," Elly said, "but all evening I've been trying to figure out who it is that you make me think of. At first I thought I must have seen you somewhere, but now I'm sure it isn't that. And it's not the usual resemblance. You don't look like anybody I've ever known, but you suggest someone. And it's someone I've known quite well, too."

"Oh, I'm just one of those people who's always reminding someone of someone. At first it was an awful blow to my pride, but I'm used to it now. Dance?" They moved onto the rather cramped space, and began to dance. Funny. When he put his arm around her she got a distinct impression that it had happened before, that it was something she was quite used to. Suddenly he ducked to avoid a collision with an oncoming couple. Somehow that gave her the key. It was all made clear to her in a fraction of a second. It was Ted that he reminded her of. Not that he looked like Ted. They were utterly different as to coloring and facial architecture. Ted had been dark, with straight black hair, and his face had been a distinct oval. This man's hair was light brown—nearly blond—and it curled. His complexion was quite fair, and he had hollow cheeks under extremely high cheek bones. But there was something. The way he moved, probably. A sudden twist of the head. His dancing position and the way he held her were really awfully much the same. Those emphatic gestures of his hands. It was quite amazing.

"I've got it," she said to him, looking up. "I know who it is you are like."

"Who?" idly, "anyone I know?"

"Oh, no," she said, "just a boy I used to know." She smiled faintly to herself as she said the words. It had never entirely ceased to surprise her that she could be so casual about Ted. There was something awfully queer about dancing around with this man she'd only just met and feeling as though she'd known him always. And it wasn't a thing she could tell him. He wouldn't know what she was talking about, he'd just think she was handing him an awfully old line. So she said no more about it. Anyway, after she'd placed the resemblance it seemed to disappear.

"Let's sit down again," she said. "It's too uncomfortable to dance." They went back to the corner where Elly had been sitting before. She sat on the stool and he lounged on the floor at her feet.

"Oh, say," he said, "Valentine thinks I ought to have some kind of standing headpiece on the column, and I'm awfully dumb about anything like that. If you should happen to get any kind of idea that you think would be good, will you tell me?"

"Maybe I can make a design for you. I'll try."

"Would you, really? I was kind of wishing you'd say that, only I didn't quite have the nerve to ask. I really do like your stuff."

"And I really do like yours."

"It looks as though we were off to a pretty good start," Steve said. "Let's have a drink on it." They went to the punch bowl and drank a silent toast. They danced again. Then they went back to the corner to try and figure out an idea for the headpiece. Eleanor felt very gay, exhilarated. She talked more than was usual, and she had an idea she was talking rather well.

They discovered some mutual likes. He knew what

she meant when she said she'd rather be Ann Pennington than Eleanora Duse. And she knew just how he felt when he said that the most beautiful thing in the world was a lower case f when Fred Cooper drew it.

"It's like that Giotto circle," he told her excitedly, "perfection encompassed in a single stroke of the pencil. I swear I could stand transfixed in front of that f for hours at a time."

"Yes," she agreed, "and it's like a certain shade of blue. You know that faded blue in the Virgin's dress. I have some China beads that color that I wouldn't exchange for a string of pearls. Do you know the color I mean?" He did. He liked it, too.

"You know," she giggled, "I once met a boy who was the most perfect looking thing I've ever seen. I got an awful kick out of him—just visual. And I tried to explain it to him by telling him he reminded me of the blue in the Virgin's dress. He was awfully mad."

They hated some of the same things, too. Bananas, for instance, which they agreed were zero in food. And *Faust*, which they thought was terrible, no matter who sang it. And the performance of a new bleached blonde soubrette, about whom all the public and nearly all the critics at the moment were raving. It was really quite amazing. They were almost awed by the discovery.

"It's pretty good to like the same things," he said blithely, "but when you find someone who hates the same things you do, it's incomparable. This ought to be good."

"It probably will be."

It seemed perfectly natural, when it came time to leave, that he should take her home.

CHAPTER XVII

I

ELEANOR called him up a few days later to tell him that the design for his column headpiece was ready.

"Oh, say," he said, "that's great of you. I didn't really think you'd do it. I wanted to call you up, but I was afraid if I did you'd think I was hinting. I don't suppose you could have dinner with me tonight, could you? I've just signed a contract with *The Passing Show* to write a piece a month for them for the next year, and I want to celebrate." Yes, she could have dinner with him, Elly said, and would like to very much.

He came to the place to call for her at six o'clock.

"You didn't mind that I said yes right away, did you?" she asked him. "I simply can't be coy."

"Hell, no," he said emphatically, "I'm tickled to death you did it. It shows that you have faith in my intelligence."

After a few minutes they went out, taking a bus down to the Brevoort for dinner. Steve lived on Twelfth Street, and knew by heart all the Village eating places. The red ink joints, he told Elly were all right when you were broke, but on the whole he preferred good food and service to any amount of picturesqueness.

"There's an awful lot of hokum down here," he said. "I swear I don't know why I live in this neighborhood."

"When I first planned to leave home," she told him, "of course it was the Village I thought of. Then when it really happened I purposely avoided it, because I didn't want to

be labeled. You know the dumb ideas people get. Greenwich Village still means free love and nothing else to the majority of people. But there is something about this part of town that really gets me, especially in the warm weather. The air itself is different. When you pass the south side of Fourteenth Street you seem to move into a different city. And the Square really is lovely."

"Even the wop side?"

"Even that. By the way," she said, "this was going to be a celebration of your *Passing Show* contract, and we haven't said a word about it. What are you going to write for them, and how did you ever get it? That's an awfully hard magazine to break into, isn't it?"

"Well," he said, "they got to reading *The Spheroid*, and thought I could do better if I had more space, so they wrote me a letter and asked me to come around. I went, and we talked things over, and now I have to write fifteen hundred words a month for the next year. And I'm not restricted. I can write anything I want."

"It's really wonderful. Are'nt you thrilled?"

"Yes, I am, although I try to act as though it bored me half to death. I don't mind telling you, though. You're a comfortable sort of person." Elly smiled, a little mock rueful smile. He caught it.

"You don't mind, do you, that I said that? It's really the highest tribute I can pay you. I don't mean that you're just like another fellow, or anything like that. Believe me, I'm perfectly well aware that you're a girl. But I get the feeling that you know just what I mean when I say something, and that I don't have to put on an act for your benefit."

"You don't. And I'm awfully glad you do feel comfortable with me. I want to be able to say anything I

like to you, too. I've always had a lot of trouble with boys because they insisted upon reading hidden meanings into the things I said, or interpreting me. I'm awfully blunt and tactless, and not a bit subtle, and people aren't used to that, I guess. It's funny, I learned a long time ago that if you want to deceive a man the simplest way is to tell him the exact truth. Nine times out of ten he'll reject it flatly in his own mind, and decide that you really mean the exact opposite of what you're saying. Are girls like that, too?"

"Oh, I don't know. I haven't known a great many girls, and I really can't generalize. But most that I have known have exhibited one characteristic in common. The minute I'd show any signs of interest they'd begin to think that they owned me. It got my goat. I can't stand being owned."

"I know how you feel. I can't stand it, either. I left home because I couldn't stand being owned. But you shouldn't be too harsh about the girls. They can't help it. As a matter of fact, I don't think they are aware of the attitude. I think it's some sort of subconscious instinct at work. I can't explain it very well, but it's sort of like this:—if a girl acts as though she owns a man he might be convinced after a while that she does. Sort of hooked before he knows about it. I think that's the way about half the women in the world get their husbands. And you know, even now, with all their emancipation, most women want more than anything else to get married."

"I suppose so. Don't you?"

"No. Not now I don't, anyway. I don't mean that I don't want to get married now, I mean that the way I feel now I don't want to get married ever. It took so much struggling and fighting to get where I am now that

I feel as though nothing on earth could make me change my circumstances."

"You sound just like a man. That's precisely the point of view of the confirmed bachelor. I've never heard a woman express it before."

"Do you believe I mean it?"

"Yes. I can't see any reason why you should want to marry, either. There's very little in it for a girl like you."

"You're wonderful," she said enthusiastically. "You're absolutely the first man I've ever said that to who didn't tell me that I was either lying to him or lying to myself. It seems impossible to make them understand that complete freedom of thought and action might be just as desirable to a woman as it is to a man. And you can't have that if you tie up your life with anybody else, no matter who the person is, or how understanding."

"Of course," he said, "it's been pretty simple for you so far. But suppose you should really fall for somebody? You know, an awful lot of confirmed bachelors have given up their precious liberty because they couldn't resist a girl. Usually they've regretted it. Do you think you'd be strong enough to hold out against love?"

"I've thought of that, too," Elly replied, "and I honestly don't know. But I don't think I'll ever really love anybody. I'm too self-centered. I did once, when I was quite a kid. I was crazy about a boy, the one who first put rebellious ideas into my head. We were going to get married when we got old enough, but he was killed in the war. I have always interpreted that as a sort of symbol. If I'd married him I would have lost my freedom to him. And another thing. I learned something quite terrible when he died, but it was also something that gave me a

lot of power. I was really crazy about that boy. I honestly loved him. But I got over losing him in less than a month. The really sharp pain, I mean. At first I thought I'd have to die, too, but after a while I discovered myself taking an interest in things again. I hated myself for it; it was an awful discovery to make, but think what a weapon it'll be in the future." Steve looked at her speculatively.

"You're an amazing person," he said. "It would be awfully interesting to test your theories." Elly laughed.

"Why don't you?"

"Is that a dare?"

"No. I don't think there'd be much fun in that for either of us. But I do think we can get on awfully well together. You'll be safe in the knowledge that you can say anything you want to me, and display as much interest as you care to, without having me pounce upon you with 'this is so sudden!' And I'll be safe in the knowledge that I can say anything that comes into my head, without having you misunderstand me or think I mean just the opposite of what I'm saying. How I love a man who doesn't need footnotes to conversation."

"Well," said Steve, "as I told you up at Morgan's the other night, this ought to be good."

"And as I told you the other night up at Morgan's, it probably will be. In fact, I'm sure it will. What time is it?"

"Nearly ten. Gee, I didn't realize we'd been sitting here so long. What'll we do now?"

"Come up to my place for a little while. You have to get the design, anyway. It's up there."

They walked down to the starting place of the bus, where they had to stand on line about fifteen minutes

before they could get seats on top. When they finally got aboard one, Steve paused at one of the rear seats, but Elly led him farther forward.

"Come along," she said, "leave that seat for someone who'll appreciate it." Steve chuckled. "Funny kid," he said, patting her arm.

Up at the place they sat till after midnight and talked.

"I love now," Elly said. "I think probably it's the most comfortable time, even though it's not the most poetical, in all history. For the individual, of course. Just think how much we know about each other already. Why five years ago, even, we'd have taken six months to get acquainted, and now we've done it in six hours. Isn't it great that we can skip all the awkward preliminaries and get right into the amusing part?"

"That's not altogether because it's now," Steve said. "It's partly because it's you. You are an amazing little thing, you know. I've really never met anybody who gave me such a sense of ease as you. There seems to be nothing I couldn't say to you, and I'm sure there's nothing you couldn't say to me."

"No," she laughed, "there isn't. And I'm going to begin right now. I have a tremendous amount of work to do in the morning, and I think it would be a very good idea to get some sleep."

"Righto," said Steve. "I'll go. And I don't even mind that."

"Don't forget your drawing," she said, giving it to him, as he lazily got up from his chair.

"Oh, thanks, you are a brick to do it for me."

"Good night. It's been lots of fun."

"Good night. Shall we do it again, soon?"

"By all means. Soon and often."

"Nice child." He put his hand on the doorknob, as if to go. Then he turned back, smiling, and took her casually but definitely in his arms. "I just wanted to make it plain," he said, "in case you weren't sure, that this is not to be a Platonic friendship." With that he kissed her quite thoroughly.

"Oh, no," Elly said, after she had regained her breath. "I wouldn't have it Platonic for the world. Especially after that. No, one's quite enough to sell me the idea," she said, wriggling out of his arms as he bent to kiss her the second time. "Good night, my non-Platonic friend."

How perfectly nice, thought Elly, after he had gone. There was probably nothing in the world more pleasant than the beginnings of a crush. The locution of her high school days still seemed the most satisfactory one. She didn't like to call it an affair, even in her own mind. That gave it too much importance. No, a crush was exactly right. Playing at love was much more fun than love itself. All the gayety with none of the responsibilities and pain.

It occurred to her suddenly from some inner source that she was afraid. Afraid of anything that savored of responsibility to another human being. Having worked and fought for nearly ten years to reach a point where she would be responsible only to herself, she had developed what now, it was vaguely suggested to her from within her own mind, amounted to a positive horror of becoming involved with anybody else. It was more than a disinclination, she realized, it was a definite fear. The thought flashed with lightning swiftness in and out of her mind. What she said to herself, actually, was, "Heavens, I'm getting positively hyped on this stuff."

2

As they had predicted, it got to be very good. Their relationship, following the course it had begun that night, grew swiftly into something completely satisfactory for both. It was a light thing, and joyous. They understood each other, as companions they were perfectly suited, and yet there was sufficient warmth and challenge in it to make it a kind of game. They played at love, although the word never passed between them.

The early days were delightful. They had all the adventures that two young things, playing at love in New York, invariably have. They rode on the Staten Island ferry, eating popcorn and laughing uproariously at nothing. They discovered the delights of driving up Fifth Avenue and through Central Park in a dilapidated hansom cab. They walked east from Fifth Avenue on Fourteenth Street, exploring the alien and entertaining land that lies there, and standing transfixed before the lurid lightographs outside the ten-cent movie theaters that infest Union Square. Occasionally they dined in the little backyard places of the Village, and sat afterward in Washington Square Park.

Eleanor was perfectly happy. She had from Steve the same sort of reliable companionship that she'd had long ago from Ted, only there had been pain then, and now there wasn't. This was all gay.

They went to the theater together, and they planned to hear some concerts later when the season began. Elly confessed that she'd always been more or less anesthetic to music, but Steve said that was just because she'd never had the right influences.

"You're too hard, anyway," he said one night when

they were loafing at her place. "In the emotions, I mean. Your mind is flexible enough, but your emotions are awfully unyielding. That's the result of this fixed idea life you've been leading all these years. You've got what you went after now, why don't you unbend a little, and take something in through your emotions? You come to the Philadelphia Symphony with me, and bathe in that glory for a while, and maybe you'll get to be a little more human."

"Am I as bad as all that?" she laughed.

"Oh, that's not the point," he said, "it's really for your own sake. You never seem to be relaxed. You're afraid to let yourself go. Sometimes when I watch you I get the feeling that you have some tremendous dynamo always working at top speed inside you, a dynamo you're afraid of, and that some day if you relax your vigilance it'll explode."

"Well," she pondered, "perhaps you're right, but I don't think so. And it's not that I'm afraid to let myself go. I am let go. I am relaxed, but there's nothing there. As a matter of fact, I don't seem to have the capacity for feeling very much. I like music, when it's sweet music, and falls gently upon my ears, but it doesn't excite me. I've often heard people talking about how Caruso's voice just wracked and tore them, but it never did that to me. I'd go to hear him and put myself in a receptive mood, but nothing like that would happen. I'm not so sure I'd care about it, at that. It must be awfully uncomfortable to have such easily stirred emotions. You're open to so much suffering."

"You *are* a hard little beast," he said, "but you're cheating yourself whether you believe it or not. You're trying to make yourself immune to life, which, of course,

has its advantages, but it also has its penalties, as you'll probably find out some day. I'd hate like hell to be in love with you!"

"Well, don't be," she said flippantly.

"Don't worry," he answered, a trifle grimly, "I won't. But I wouldn't mind being the guy who finally breaks you down. Oh, someone will, all right, and what a lot of excitement there'll be then. I don't care what you think, there's an awful lot pent up inside you."

"Oooh, look out."

"What's the matter?"

"Well, that sounds as though the next remark would be, 'you're a smouldering volcano,' or words to that effect, and then you and I would have to part forever."

"Be reassured, it wasn't going to be. You can be awfully irritating when you want to be." She came over to his chair and took his hand in both of hers.

"I'm sorry," she said, the flippancy gone from her voice. "I didn't mean to be." She bent over him, still holding his hand, and kissed him gently on the lips. He drew her down to him, and held her close.

"You can be awfully sweet, too," he said. His hands strayed over her hair, loosening the pins until it tumbled down.

"I love your hair," he said, winding it about his fingers. "How it is you never bobbed it? I'm glad you didn't. It's much prettier this way, but I'm surprised you didn't cut it off, just as a symbol of your liberation."

"That's just why I didn't," she said. "I didn't want any symbols. I didn't want the thing to get mixed up in my own mind, and I didn't want my family or anyone else to get the wrong impression. I purposely avoided as many outward signs of freedom, or things that are ac-

cepted as outward signs as I possibly could. Being free was a sacred sort of thing to me. Please don't laugh. I suppose it's impossible for me to get to you exactly what I mean, but as a child I was so much a piece of property, and I wanted so passionately to belong to myself, that the thing became an absolute obsession. You can't understand it, because you're not a Jew.

"It's a part of the race, this fierce kind of parental ownership, and it's referred to as 'that beautiful family life.' Lots of people fall for it, but I made up my mind when I was quite little that it wouldn't get me. You know, it's quite parallel to the tradition about French women. They always say French girls are virtual prisoners until they marry. Well, in Jewish families, especially among the kind I come from, you're a prisoner to your parents, not only until you marry, but forever after, and the only satisfaction you can get is to have children of your own, and make prisoners of them. I remember once, when I was about six years old, my mother slapped my face, and when I cried and said some day I'd be big enough to defend myself, and then she couldn't hit me any more, she told me she'd be my boss as long as she lived, and if got to be fifty years old and did something she didn't like, she'd slap my face then. That's what children are for. Just something to own, and work off your feeling of power on."

"Yes, I understand," he said, "but I think you're mistaken in applying it to Jews exclusively. There are just as many Gentiles who are like that. You're less charitable to the Jews than most Gentiles, do you know it?"

"Well," she said, "that's another thing you can't understand, not being a Jew yourself. If you ever begin to

investigate you'll discover that the most rabid Jew haters are Jews themselves, because they have to suffer for the actions of all Jews. Don't fool yourself for one minute that it isn't a handicap to be a Jew. I'm not saying that because I've ever felt it particularly myself. I haven't, but I know it exists. There is a feeling, and there always will be, until intermarriage straightens the whole thing out, and that'll be a long way off."

"Do you think it will become general?"

"In time, yes. It's my strong belief that it is the predestined fate of the race. And every intermarriage I've witnessed has not only been successful itself, but it has produced the finest results. Children of mixed parentage—I've known enough of them to reach a pretty definite conclusion in my own mind—seem to get the best qualities of the Jew and the Gentile. I'm convinced it's the solution of the problem. And don't think that there isn't a problem." Steve smiled, as he handed her the hairpins he had taken out of her hair.

"All that outburst just because I asked you why you hadn't bobbed your hair," he said. "You're very cute when you get excited. I must try it again some time."

"It's very wearing," she said, relaxing against him. "You're so restful, Stevie," she sighed. "I really love to have you hold me. It's so nice."

"I'm glad you like it."

"I wonder why people get so exercised over petting," she said later, between kisses. "It's a grand institution."

CHAPTER XVIII

I

By fall their presence together was accepted everywhere. When Morgan Princeley told Elly about a party, he would ask her to let Steve know. And Elly took him around to meet Eva, who had spent the summer abroad, and who had heard of Stephen only through the mail. Eva's shrewd, young-old eyes appraised him, and she gave her approval.

"He's good stuff," she told Elly, "do you think you'll marry him?" Elly was shocked and humorously furious.

"Aren't you silly," she said. "Of course not. In the first place he doesn't want to marry me. He's not a marrying man. And in the second place, I don't want to marry him. You're just as bad as a ladies' aid society."

"Well, I don't know," mused Eva. "The way he looks at you . . . But I guess you ought to know."

"Take my word for it, I do. There's nothing to it. Just a kind of crush. We do get along awfully well, and it's lots of fun, but not in the least serious."

"Want to bring him to Bobby's party?" Elly said she would. Bobby had succumbed at last to the repeated urgings of a childhood beau in Washington, and was to be married in January. Her continued presence in New York was countenanced by her family only because she gave the pretext of trousseau buying, and as a matter of fact, she spent almost as much time in Washington now as she did in New York. The gang was planning a big farewell party for Thanksgiving night. On the first of

December she was going home to stay until her wedding.

"Oh, yes. I think the gang will like him, don't you?"

"I can't see any reason why not."

2

The first time they ever had anything like a quarrel was after Bobby's party. Elly hadn't seen Bud Lane in several months, and without thinking particularly about it, she spent a large part of the evening with him. Steve seemed to be enjoying himself. The people were familiar with his work, and gave him rather more than the usual attention accorded a newcomer. Elly, seeing that he was well established among her friends, slipped into a quiet corner with Bud, and left Steve to his own devices.

He was silent on the way home, with the kind of silence that speaks eloquently of resentment. Elly sensed his irritation and made an effort to overcome it, by speaking lightly about nothing in particular.

"It was a good party, wasn't it?" she asked.

"Um."

"Isn't Bobby a glorious girl?"

"She's all right."

"Don't you think she's beautiful?" No answer. They walked along in silence again. Steve's face was turned resolutely forward, his chin very high, his eyes at once hard and hurt. At Elly's door, which they reached without another word, she gave him the key. He opened the door, handed the key back to her, and said in a strained voice:

"Guess I'll run along. I have a lot to do in the morning."

"Steve." There was coaxing in her voice. "You can't. Come up for just a few minutes." She took his

hand and dragged him gently inside. Half angrily he accompanied her up the stairs. Inside the room he stood stiffly near the door until she pushed him into a chair, and poised herself lightly on his knees.

"Now," she said gayly, "what's it all about? Have I done something?"

"Oh, no," stiffly. He did not touch her; just let her sit there bolt upright. She took his hand and kissed it. He jerked it away.

"Steve." The gayety went out of her voice and a note of pleading came in. "Steve, don't be this way, please. Tell me what's the matter."

"What's the use of playing innocent about it," he said stiffly, "you know perfectly well what's the matter."

"I *don't*, really."

"Well, if you really want to know, I think you were disgusting to-night. Taking me to a party full of strange people and dumping me in their midst, and then sneaking off in a corner with that fellow Lane. Hell, it's none of my business who you're in love with, but it seems to me you might at least have managed your affairs with a little more delicacy."

"*Steve!*" Astonishment, amusement and horror struggled for expression in her voice.

"*Steve,*" he mocked her tone. "There's not need of doing that. It won't get by. I know you feel guilty. I could tell by the way you acted on the way home."

"I don't know what to say, really. You seemed to be having such a good time. Everybody was around you, and listening to you, I didn't think I'd be neglecting you just by talking to Bud for a while. I hadn't seen him in months. And as for being in love with him, that's ridiculous and you know it."

"Well, you certainly acted as though you were. And so did he." She made no answer to this. It was so utterly absurd there could be no answer. This was a new, strange person she was with. A hurt and sulky little boy, who'd never before given any sign of his existence. The discovery distressed her considerably, but it did something else, too. It made her feel awfully old, as though she were his mother, and he'd been dreadfully hurt. There wasn't any use trying to argue him out of the mood. She could sense that. Like a little boy, he must be petted out of it. She rose and turned off the center light, leaving only the little dim desk lamp burning. When she came back she sank to her knees on the floor, resting her head on his knees, and holding his two hands in hers. For a few minutes she sat that way, saying nothing. She could feel the tiniest relaxation in his mind and body. He was just a little less taut, his determination to be unapproachable had wavered just the slightest bit. She got up from the floor, then, and slipped gently back to her former position. This time he did not resist her so utterly. When she snuggled closely to him and put his arms around her, he left them there, although he did not respond of his own accord. Gradually, however, the softness of her body against his, the warmth of the room and the intangible atmosphere of peace that always pervaded it, communicated themselves to him. The tautness left his body, the grim set of his mouth and chin relaxed, and at length with a sigh he drew her closer to him and kissed her. It was a strange kiss, coming from a man. It had surrender in it, more than anything else, and a return to peace. For a long time they sat that way, saying nothing, immersed in

beatific warmth. They had been away from each other, and now they were together again.

Some instinct, subtle and sure, told her it would be safe to speak again.

"All right now?" she asked him, kissing his ear.

"Yes, dear. I was a fool. It won't happen again. I don't know now how it happened. Only, somehow, I couldn't bear seeing you so thoroughly wrapped up in your conversation with that fellow. It wasn't that I was jealous. I guess it must just be my masculine pride."

"I know. But it's all right now. Are you happy again?"

"Umm. Are you?"

"Yes." Silence once more, broken only by occasional inarticulate murmurs from Steve and long, peaceful sighs from Elly. How like a cat she was. Happy as long as some caressing hand stroked her gently.

"Oh," she said drowsily after a long time, "this is so nice! Do you know, Steve, I almost love you."

"Almost?" he repeated. "Only almost? I do love you. I think I found it out to-night. And some day," bending to kiss the hollow in her throat, "I'm going to kiss you all over. Every inch of you." She smiled sleepily and shook her head.

"No," she said, "I wouldn't care so much for that."

"We'll see."

"All right, dear, but let's not see now. I'm so comfortable and so sleepy."

"Wouldn't it be nice if I could hold you in my arms all night?"

"Ye-es, I guess so, but I think thinking about it would probably be nicer than doing it." He stared at her gloomily.

"God," he said, "you're a funny girl. I can't make up my mind whether you're afraid to let yourself feel anything, or whether you're simply incapable of it. Can't you ever put away your thinking apparatus? You're really missing a tremendous lot, Elly. Just feeling is wonderful sometimes."

"I imagine it must be." She said it a little wistfully, but he did not catch that note. To him there was apparent only an attitude of superiority. She was boasting of her immunity. Well, he'd show her some time. She was human, after all.

3

Nothing was quite the same after that night. The old comradeship remained, and the laughter, but it was as if the actual mention of the word love between them had wrought some subtle change—brought some new element into their relationship, and taken away something that they had formerly had. There was a self-consciousness, scarcely perceptible, but present, nevertheless, and the perfect peace of their hours together was ever so slightly marred.

While Steve did not precisely live up to his determination to "show her," the feeling did somehow get into his entire attitude, and his caresses thereafter were tinged faintly with bitterness. It was baffling and infuriating to him that this girl, so soft and warm, so made for love, should lie passively in his arms, accepting his kisses as though they were the kisses of a child. It wasn't that she was unyielding actually. He'd never known anyone who fell more naturally into the attitude of love. Only underneath the softness and the physical flexibility was a streak of the most unbending steel. She simply couldn't give. She wanted, awfully, she told him when they spoke

of it, as they often did these days, but she simply couldn't. The habit of years was too strong.

"I'm like a bone that's been incorrectly set," she told him, ruefully, "and I guess I'll just have to grow wrong for the rest of my life."

"Sometimes," he told her, "when a bone's been set wrong they break it all over again and reset it correctly."

"Yes, I know," she told him, "but that takes patience, an awful lot of patience."

"Well, I haven't shown any impatience yet, have I?" he asked.

"Oh, Stevie," she asked, pleadingly, "can't we stop this? It's spoiling everything for us. We started out to have so much fun together, and now we're reduced to this. We do nothing but argue every time we're alone a few minutes."

Then they would resolutely stop their discussion and make a conscious and definite attempt to recapture the mood of careless fooling that had marked their early days together. Sometimes they would get it, but more often they would fail, and end the evening in a gloomy fog, bristling with attitudes.

A dozen times Eleanor made up her mind that she would put an end to the whole thing. It didn't fit in with her plans at all, she decided. When the annoyance involved in a situation got to the point where it outweighed the pleasure, that was the time to put a period to it. She had made up her mind a long time ago that her life must not be complicated, that her relations with other people must always be such that she could cut them off abruptly, if necessary, without pain to herself. That freedom she had struggled so long for must be maintained at all costs.

The only thing was, it didn't prove quite that easy. Steve had grown to be an awfully important part of her life, almost without her realizing it. Deliberately tearing him out of it was an impossibly hard thing to do, as she discovered when she tried it. After an unusually irritating evening in the place, during which the almost material peace that hung about the room had been shattered to sharp, hard bits, by their quarreling, she had brought herself to the point of making the suggestion.

"Steve," she said, her voice trembling a little. "This is silly, and we've got to stop it. We're not happy together any more. Life is just a series of quarrels. We are acting almost as though we were married. What do you say about calling it off? I'm awfully fond of you and I know you're awfully fond of me, but we seem to have reached an impasse. I can't let go of my mind and immerse myself in you even though I want to terribly, and you seem to have lost sight of everything else. You're trying to do to me now exactly the same thing that my mother tried to do when I was a child, and in the end I had to separate from my mother. I think you and I had better separate now, too. How about it?" He was grave but perfectly matter-of-fact. And he didn't argue the matter at all.

"I guess you're right. There's no point to this sort of thing. Let's try it for a while, anyway. Only promise me, if you find you want to change back, you won't be proud. You know I love you, Elly, and I think you love me, only you're afraid to admit it to yourself. Maybe if you get away from me for a while you'll be able to." They kissed and said good-by, quite casually, and not at all as if they were putting an end to a living thing.

As a matter of fact they both knew then that they weren't putting an end to it, although Elly wouldn't have admitted it for the world. It would be easy, she told herself. Life had been peaceful and gay before he came into it. A day or two of readjustment, and it would be that way again. She read herself to sleep.

She found herself saying his name at the exact instant of her return to consciousness in the morning. That was rather strange, because it had never happened before. It was only because of the new condition, she explained to herself. He'd soon get out of her mind. She went to the office. At eleven o'clock the phone rang. He usually called her at that time. Her heart leaped painfully as she picked up the receiver. It was a million years before the voice came over. The voice was her mother's.

"Hello, stranger," Mrs. Hoffman said. "I haven't heard from you all week. When are you coming up for dinner?" They set a date, exchanged a little gossip and rang off. She was surprised to find that she was trembling. Had she really expected him to call when she had told him not to? She couldn't help laughing a little at herself. Of course, this was all because she was unused to it. In a day or two she'd become accustomed to it all, and life would go on as it always had. That was as it should be. She tried to think of things to do that would take her mind off it. A date with Chester Adelstein. She'd been curious to see him ever since she'd heard from him several months ago. But then Steve had come along and she hadn't bothered.

She called him at his law office. Mr. Adelstein, junior, was in court, she was told, but would be back at four o'clock. Should he call? Yes, she said, he should. She stayed in the office all afternoon so she'd be sure to

get the call. Of course, he couldn't call before if he was in court, but perhaps he'd got the message if he called up his office during the day. Anyway, she stayed in all afternoon. Each time the phone rang she went through the same torment. By four o'clock she was tense and feverish. There was a lump in her throat, and her jaws ached, from the unconscious gritting of her teeth. It was all vaguely familiar to her. She had the sense of having done it before. After a while it began to filter through her consciousness how much this was like the time she had been in love with Ted and hadn't known it. Once realized, she dismissed it from her mind. Just a silly notion. She was always trying to fit things into patterns. Only it wouldn't stay dismissed. It kept coming back, like a gadfly, to sting her mind. Her thoughts were always like that. She had no control over them at all.

The telephone burst in upon this unsatisfactory self-communion. It was Chester, ponderous as ever.

"How do you do," he said. "It was charming of you to telephone me. How have you been all these months? Years, as a matter of fact."

"Pretty busy," she said, "but things are beginning to let up a bit now, and something happened to-day that made me think of you. So I took a chance and called you up. Could you manage to get away and take me to dinner to-night?"

"Well, this is very short notice, of course, and I'd had a sort of engagement"—he always tried to make it hard, Elly remembered with a giggle—"but I realize how busy you are, and I'll try to break it. Can I call you back in fifteen minutes?"

He called back to say that he'd broken the engagement,

which Elly was convinced had never existed, and they arranged to meet at the place at six o'clock. He was there promptly, puffing slightly after the stairs. He had grown quite heavy and his blond good looks, it was plain, would soon be lost in fat.

"Well," he said, clapping his hands together, "it's good to see you. You're looking fine. I thought you might like these," and he handed her a florist's box, which opened, revealed a magnificent, if slightly too large, corsage of orchids. There was never any doubt about Chester's gifts.

"Oh, they're wonderful," she said, pinning them on. "And just right with my dress."

"Orchids are always right," said Chester. "Where shall we dine? And what shall we do afterwards?"

"I have a couple of things to do around the Metropole," she said, "and I thought maybe you wouldn't mind going there with me. You can watch the show from the wings, and talk to the people if you like. Do you mind?"

"That will be delightful," Chester said. "I like to go behind the scenes. It's so interesting. I know a little—er—chorus girl in *The Foibles* and sometimes I wait for her there. Well," clapping his hands again in the characteristic gesture, "tell me all about yourself. You're getting to be quite a famous person, with your picture in the Sunday papers and all that sort of thing. I always knew you could do it."

She discovered, with dismay, that she had done the wrong thing. This date with Chester wasn't helping a bit. All through the heavy and expensive dinner at the heavy and expensive restaurant Chester was talking about himself and she was thinking about Steve. It was awful. She wanted to shriek at him to be still, so that

she could think about Steve without being disturbed. But after all, she had suggested the date, and it was up to her to be as decent as possible. She said she had to be at the theater rather early, and thus was able to hurry him through dinner.

Somehow they got through and over to the theater. After planting him in a fairly comfortable spot backstage and introducing him to a couple of girls, she disappeared, and was gone for an hour.

"Sorry to have deserted you," she said, "but it couldn't be helped."

"I'm having a delightful time," he assured her. There was nothing to keep her at the theater now, so they left, and it was too early to call it an evening. She couldn't bear the idea of bringing him back to the place and enduring several hours more of heavy conversation, so she grasped eagerly at his suggestion that they go dancing. It wasn't so bad, either. He was an excellent dancer and for a little while she managed to release herself a little in the music and the subdued lights and the rhythm of the dance. But not for long. Soon the stinging gadfly of her thoughts came back to buzz maddeningly around her mind. She must get away from him. Abruptly she asked him to take her home.

"I'm awfully tired," she said suddenly. "And I remember you never liked to stay out very late." After an interminable while the check was paid and they left. At the door to her house she made it plain that she did not wish him to come up.

"Good night," she said, "it's been nice seeing you again. Thanks awfully for the flowers . . . and for breaking the date." She recalled that he liked to be appreciated. And, as she'd done so little else for him

after dragging him out with her, she felt she owed him at least that. Bewildered by the suddenness of her leavetaking, and not a little displeased, he left her. She flew upstairs. There would be peace up there in the attic. That had never failed her.

But it did. The peace that had invariably closed in around her when she came into her little domain, had vanished, just as though it had never existed. The room might have been any room. She felt at that moment, almost as though she'd never gone away from the house uptown. Little angry, confused thoughts were swarming all over the place, like hornets. That was it, hornets and gadflies. Her hateful thoughts. Steve. She wanted him. But she didn't want him. She needed him. But it was only his presence she needed, his mind and his gayety. She didn't need his body. Yes, she did too. But she didn't need him the way he wanted her to need him. She needed him as an adjunct to herself, but a separate adjunct. She couldn't flow into him, into his mind and body, and become immersed in him, the way he wanted her to. Oh, why did it have to be so mixed up! She couldn't sleep. She picked up a book—*The Three Black Pennys*—Steve had given it to her. Hergesheimer, he said, sensed beauty and brought it before his readers as nobody writing in America could, Steve said, and Elly had agreed. Of all his books *The Three Black Pennys* was the one she loved the best. She had not read it for some time, but its beauty was still upon her. Maybe it would drive away the buzzing gadflies.

She read. It was beautiful enough and powerful enough to sink her mind into. Gradually she felt less tense as she became absorbed in the story of the lovely Ludowicka and Howat, the black Penny. Ludowicka

was the one woman, in fiction, acclaimed fascinating by her creator, whose fascination was convincing to Elly. Joseph Hergesheimer not only told you that Ludowicka was seductive, he made her seductive. She read on:

Behind a blood red screen of sumach Howat again kissed Ludowicka. Her arms tightened about his neck; she raised her face to him with an abandon that blinded him to the world about, and his entire being was drawn in an agony of desire to his lips. She sank limply into his rigid embrace, a warm sensuous burden with parted lips.

Beautiful. That was the way to love. To drown your mind in a sea of feeling. That was what Steve wanted her to do. And she couldn't do it. She would like to, all right. It must be wonderful to lose yourself in somebody that way. But if you couldn't? Did that mean you must cut yourself off forever from the person? It wasn't fair. She flung the book away from her. There was no use deceiving herself. She wanted Steve more than she didn't want him, quarrels or not. And she wasn't going to be proud. She'd call him in the morning. No. She'd call him now. She rang the number and waited feverishly, but there was no answer. She couldn't sleep. She couldn't read. Just lying there in bed was torment, so she got up and started to work on a new poster. That helped a little. All the warring forces in her let themselves out in a perfect fury of energy. She worked for two hours, and then came to a sudden, dead stop, used up. Her head and her body felt absolutely hollow. She stumbled into bed and fell almost at once into an exhausted sleep.

CHAPTER XIX

I

THEY had a gay party to celebrate. There was no self-consciousness about the reunion, either. In the morning Elly had been able to call him quite calmly, and his response had been equally matter-of-fact.

"Will you have a date with me tonight?" she had asked, simply. And he had said yes. The two terrible days were blotted out. Their party was altogether a success, bringing them nearer to the spirit of last year than anything they'd had in a long time. In a burst of extravagance Steve ordered champagne and their consequent hilarity bridged whatever gap of awkwardness they might otherwise have felt. Gayly they rode uptown.

Peace pervaded the little room again. Wordlessly she went into his outstretched arms, and the peace deepened.

"Do you love me, Elly?"

"Yes, I do," she said. A pause. "I *must*," she added, emphatically, as though she were trying to convince herself.

"Kiss me, then, as though you did." Dutifully she kissed him. There was tenderness in it, even love. But there was no abandonment. She tried to give herself in that kiss. She wanted to. But she could not. Something more powerful than her will to give stopped her. If she could only make her mind stop ticking. It was going, tick-tock, just like a little clock. If she could drown out that sound of her mind ticking, then maybe she could abandon herself to the kiss. It was like in-

somnia, she thought. You wanted to go to sleep. You more than wanted to, you had to. You thought you'd die if you didn't go to sleep. Yet you stayed awake.

"I can't do anything," she said. "I love you, Stevie. I need you near me. But I can't pour myself out. I've got to stay inside myself. It isn't that I want to—I can't help it. You'll have to teach me. You know what you said about the broken bone being reset? Well, that's what I need. I've worked so long to isolate myself that I don't know how to be any other way. Will you help me?"

"I'll try. I ought to be able to love you out of your isolation, if I can't do anything else. But really, dear, I can't understand how you can remain so perfectly calm when I'm caressing you. Don't you feel anything? At first I thought perhaps you were schooling yourself to show no emotion, but I've come to realize that it's no act. It must be some deeply imbedded inhibition."

"I suppose that's what you could call it. Only inhibitions are supposed to be things you don't understand, and I do understand what makes me like this. It's very simple, and I've explained it to you a dozen times. Oh, Stevie, I'm tired of discussing it and us. I want to stop analyzing and picking everything apart. I want to feel, but I don't know how. You'll have to show me the way. Don't talk to me any more. Love me."

It was no use. The sentinel of her mind simply refused to go off duty. It made no difference that she relaxed her body, that she commanded herself to give way to the emotional excitement that seemed to come so easily and naturally from him. The little thoughts clicked inevitably on. It was maddening. She tried not to let him know, but in the end, he went, baffled and hurt.

The reunion hadn't been such a great success, after all. For a little while it had been all right, but here they were, she realized as she undressed slowly and prepared for bed, right back where they'd been when they decided to quit. She was quite thoroughly miserable. There was really only one thing in the world she wanted—peace—and it was plain to see she would have none of that until this thing was settled. Before she'd got into it she would have thought it simple to solve the problem. If a thing distressed you, you stopped it. Just as simple as that. But always before it had been something very easy to be definite about. It had always been something she wanted posed against something she didn't want. But this was different. This wasn't a case of "either or." She couldn't just say "I'll give him up," and go ahead. She'd tried that, and it hadn't worked. She hated herself. She wished she'd never met him. Characteristically, her chief emotion was one of resentment against the circumstances that had broken into her peace and freedom. And she could see weeks, months, even, of this conflict stretching ahead of her.

2

It was Fate playing into his hands, Steve concluded, when Mike Strauss decided to send him to Paris to get some advance publicity on the *Pierrot Revue*, which he was importing the following spring. Morris Gest had cleaned up on the *Chauve Souris* and the *Moscow Art Theater* that way—why shouldn't he do the same? Steve was to join the troupe in Paris, stay with it there, accompany it to London, where it had a midwinter engagement, and then conduct it to New York. That was Strauss's plan. Steve, however, had a slightly different

one, he confided to Elly on the night he told her about the trip.

"I'm a little fed up on this job," he said. "I'd like to lay off it for a while—six months or so. I want to do some real writing, anyway, and I'll never do it while I'm on the job. It's so easy to kid myself that I'm working too hard. Now this is my plan. I'll talk Strauss into giving me a leave of absence for six months, beginning in April. I'll work on the *Pierrot* thing until then, deposit 'em safely on the boat, and then take a vacation. Six months, with nothing to do but loaf and write."

"That sounds wonderful," Elly said. "Are you sure you can get away with it? I'll miss you."

"Oh no, you won't," Steve smiled. "You'll come with me."

"Oh," faintly. "When did you decide that?"

"Just now. No, actually, I decided it when Strauss first talked about sending me over, only then I didn't altogether realize it. But, really, Elly, it seems to me to be the answer to a lot of things. I love you. You say you love me. I'm convinced that the reason we've been having such a bad time of it these past few months is that our situation is wrong. It's all very well to talk about companionship between a man and a woman, and I have no doubt that it can exist under certain circumstances. But this is not a Platonic friendship. I love you, and I want you. This business of loving you a little bit, and then stopping short is intolerable and I can't go on with it. It's unnatural, and it accounts for the rasped nerves and the squabbling. I've tried to be patient, because I know how you feel. I haven't talked about it much, but that doesn't mean I haven't felt it. And, another thing, even though you probably won't be-

lieve me, it's bad for you, too. You'll see, once we really belong to each other, the whole thing'll be different. All these plaguing things will be gone—we'll be properly adjusted to each other. I know we can be tremendously happy. We can get married quietly then sail. Think of it, dear, a whole year in France. And London. You'll be crazy about London. And in the spring we'll take a motor trip through England. You'll love that the most of all. It's the most beautiful country. Full of a marvelous peace. It's like you, sort of." He was talking faster now, and eagerly. "Darling," he went on, "you know I can't get very poetical—it make me feel too silly—but I really want you most frightfully. I'll be able to make you happy. Will you do it? Are you game to try it?" His look was pleading. Eleanor stared at him. Her eyes were puzzled.

"I don't know," she said slowly. "I'd like to, but I'm not sure I can. Anyway, I'll need a little time to get used to the idea. I don't have to tell you right this minute, do I?"

"No, of course not, as long as you don't say definitely that you won't. As soon as you make up your mind I'll engage passage. I've always hated crossing, but I won't this time with you along. It'll be wonderful. You love me, don't you?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, I know it'll be all right in the end. Because if you really love me, you'll go with me. You won't be able to help it. Oh, Elly, you don't know how much I want you. There's no way of letting you know, because you've never wanted anybody yourself. But you will. I'll teach you. After you belong to me you'll understand."

After she belonged to him. There it was. That was marriage. She would belong to him. Then she wouldn't belong to herself any more. Because you can't belong to yourself and to somebody else, too. Still, what he planned was very alluring. Europe. She'd always wanted to go to Europe. And with Steve, it would be wonderful. She'd be a fool if she didn't do it. She loved him, of course she did. And she wanted to be with him, practically all the time. Then why didn't she just say all right? She wanted to do it. But she didn't. Oh, why was everything all mixed up? She'd have to think.

"Steve," she said, "you'll have to be patient with me just a little while longer. I've tried to explain the way I feel to you, oh, often, and you've tried to understand. But I think there are certain things in our minds that we just can't convey, no matter how desperately we try. Things built up from the thousands of little things that have happened to us all our lives, oh, I don't know—like those little particles that accumulate in the sea for years and years, and all of a sudden it's a coral rock. I'm awfully inarticulate about it, but I know what I mean, and I'll have to dope it out by myself. While you're here I can't think quite straight about it, because your presence counts for such a lot that it makes me forget some of the other things."

"Well, then, that's fine, because if you marry me, you'll be with me all the time, and the other things will fade out of the picture." He bent over and kissed her. "Oh, come on, dear, be a sport. Don't think up a lot of trick things, just to make it harder. You really indulge your complexes too much."

"I don't really. But I don't want to do this unless

I know you'll be happy. And if I'm not happy you won't be. I'll make you miserable. I'm a selfish beast, you know, and I've done exactly what I wanted for so long now that I don't know whether I can change."

"Darling, if you love me, you can do anything."

"That's the way it ought to be, but it's not so simple. Anyway, you go home now, and let me try to think it out for myself. Maybe in the morning, I'll know."

But in the morning she didn't, although she had stayed awake nearly all night trying to straighten it out in her mind. Of course she wanted to go. It would be a marvelous thing. But she was afraid. She had belonged to herself so long that she didn't see how she could share herself with anybody else, no matter how much she cared for that person. Well, one thing was certain. She'd made a mess of things. This freedom she'd worked so hard to get had turned into a Frankenstein monster. She'd got her freedom, all right, and now she was imprisoned by it.

She couldn't get anywhere. She made her decision eleven times that night. Five times she decided to go, and six times she decided not to. By morning she was so befuddled that she didn't know what it was all about. She must talk to somebody. She must get another slant on it. Eva would be the person, of course, but Eva was in Washington visiting her family. Finally she went up to see Muriel. Muriel was sound and sensible, and her mind worked so simply. There were no idiotic complexities, no hidden strains keeping her from happiness. She was a completely fulfilled woman. To her the whole thing was simple.

"I can't see," she said, "what you're making all the

fuss about. Either you love the man, or you don't. Which is it?"

"Oh, I love him, all right."

"Well, then, marry him. If it's the physical part of it you're afraid of, don't let that worry you. Everybody has to go through more or less the same thing with that. You're afraid of it in the beginning, and you sort of hate it, but after a while you get used to it."

"No, it isn't that—at least that's only a part of it. It's something a lot more complicated."

"Well, what?"

"I can't make it come out of my mouth so it sounds sensible, but in my head it's perfectly clear. I want to marry him, and I want to go away with him, and I want to love him, but there's some force that's stopping me. I think I must be fundamentally an alone sort of person—I need complete separateness more than I need anything else. And the consciousness of that keeps me from being able to go ahead. A dozen times I've been on the verge of calling him and telling him to get the passage, but this thing has always stopped me." Muriel looked at her with exasperated eyes.

"You get me sick," she said. "You always were peculiar but I didn't realize how much of a one you were. You're not only selfish, but you're a fool. You're standing in the way of your own happiness. Do you think you'll always be satisfied to live this way? Some day you'll be old, and then what? Will it be such fun to be a lonely old maid? Think of the future. And how about children? Look at the way you love Junior. If you had one of your own you'd love it a thousand times more. It's impossible for me to tell you what that baby means. It grows every day. At first he didn't seem so important

to me, but now, I just can't explain the feeling. He means more than my life." There were tears in her eyes, and she was talking with real eloquence. "Why, the other day," she said, "mother had him out. She said she'd come back at five o'clock and at five thirty she wasn't here yet. Well, I went through the very tortures of hell. Although I kept telling myself to be sensible, that it was all right, something stronger kept saying 'He's killed, and she's afraid to come home and tell you.' I was sure the carriage had been hit by a car, or something. I was just putting on my hat and coat to go out and look for his mangled body, when she came in. That's what a baby means."

"Um," said Elly. "But why deliberately let yourself in for anything like that? After you have it, that's different. But I don't want to care for anyone that way. It's too much of a strain."

"Oh," Muriel said impatiently, "what's the use of talking to you. You're just thoroughly self-centered, that's all. You have a chance for happiness and you're afraid to take it, because it might prevent you from concentrating on yourself for the rest of your life. You'll regret it. Just wait and see! But don't say I didn't warn you. What an oil can you're turning out to be!"

Well, that was that. Muriel was right. She was self-centered. She was an awful oil can. Granted. But what was she going to do? She was no nearer a solution than before. She was completely adrift on a sea of indecision.

3

Steve wasn't helping her very much, either. He was beginning to get impatient. After all, he said, that eve-

ning, she was making a mountain out of a molehill. If she loved him she'd go with him, and take a chance on the rest.

"But I just can't make up my mind," she said. "I want to marry you, but I'm afraid. Steve, dear, don't think I don't realize what a pest I am, but I can't help it. The idea frightens me. I don't think I can marry you." Maybe it was the notion of marriage that scared her, he thought. Some people are like that. The legal bond irked them.

"Is it that part of it your afraid of?" he asked. "You know, darling, I don't exactly know how to express this, but I don't want to leave out anything. Would you rather—this is a hell of a thing to say, but I've got to—would you rather join me in Paris, and try me for a while first? I'd show you how happy you could be, and then we could get married before we came home. Or in case you didn't want to go ahead—but you would, I know you would. I'd love you so much, and you'd love me so much!"

"That's just it. No, it isn't marriage I'm afraid of. If I go with you at all, it will be married to you, because after all, that's so much more convenient. No, it's not the bonds of marriage I'm afraid of. It's the bonds of love. I'm afraid I'll grow to love you too much, and that I'll lose myself in you. Lose my integrity. It isn't that I want to be afraid of losing it. I know it isn't worth a damn. But I'm too far gone along that path to be able to turn around so easily now. Must I decide now? Couldn't you be patient a little while longer, and help me?"

"If you really loved me," he repeated, doggedly, "you would come with me. I've got to have you altogether, or

not at all. This half way state of affairs was all right for a little while, but it can't go on any longer. I've got to know. Listen! I'm sailing Friday on the Paris. This is Tuesday. That gives you just one day to make up your mind. I've taken a chance and engaged a double stateroom. I know a man in the French Line office, and he says he can dispose of the extra one if I don't need it. But I will need it, won't I? Oh, Elly, I love you. I love you. I love you. Why do you torture me this way? I shouldn't love you, God knows; it would be much better for me if I didn't. But I do. Come with me. Trust me to make it all right. You will be losing something, I know, but you'll be getting so much more. You say you love me. Prove it by coming with me. I'll never do a thing to make you regret it. You do want to come with me, don't you?"

"Yes, I want to." He took her in his arms, and kissed her with more passion that she had ever felt from him before. "You must, dearest. Think of the places we'll see. I know just the place for us to live in Paris. There's a little apartment building on the Rue de l'Université, right near the Alexander bridge, with wonderful trees in the court. It'll be glorious. And think of the people we'll meet! It'll be so good for your work, too. You'll be twice the person you are now, darling. I'll be so proud of you, and we'll love each other so much. Elly, won't you?"

While he spoke a series of pictures flashed across her mind, as they are said to cross the mind of a drowning person. Only, instead of her past life, it was her future that she saw. On the one hand the life with Steve, as he pictured it, crowded, glamorous, full to the brim. On the other, the life alone, narrow, uneventful, growing emptier

as the years went on. How could there be any choice? The warmth of his voice and body close to her were communicating themselves to her. She was beginning at last to take on some of his excitement. Her mind was catching fire a little from the flame of his mind. The blaze consumed the fear.

"All right," she said, excitedly, "I'll go with you."

"Darling! I knew you would. I knew you'd love me enough. Look!" He drew an official-looking document from his coat pocket, and handed it to her. It was a marriage license.

"Steve!" She gave a little squeal. "How did you get it? I thought both people had to go down and get sworn in, or whatever it is you do."

"They're supposed to, but I know them pretty well down there, from the days when I used to cover City Hall. I never thought then that I'd want to use my pull for anything like this." He kissed her.

"But, dear," she asked a trifle fearfully, "are you sure it's legal?" He laughed.

"Yes, you little foolish angel. Gad, I like to hear you ask me that."

"Why?"

"Well, it shows me that you are a woman, after all. Wants to be sure she's legally married. We'd better go down tomorrow and get it over with."

"No, let us wait till Thursday. If I'm sailing on the Paris Friday I'll have to get some clothes."

"Ah, feminine again. All right. Thursday, if you say so. But I'd rather do it tomorrow, and be sure about it."

"Oh, you can be sure. What do you think I ought to

do about mother? Should I tell her first, or should I sail and leave it for Muriel to break the sad news?"

"Dearest, I don't know."

"I feel awfully mean about it. You know, I always promised her that no matter what happened, I'd tell her before I got married. She always had a hunch I'd do something like this."

"Will she be angry because I'm not Jewish?"

"Well, she won't be crazy about the idea, but she won't mind it as she would have five years ago. Anyway, she'll probably be so relieved to have me married at all that she'll fall on your neck in gratitude."

"Thanks." She kissed him.

"Oh, Steve, I'm so excited."

"Are you happy?"

"Yes. Awfully. Are you?"

"Yes." He drew her into his arms.

"We'll do such wonderful things together, darling." For a long time she lay quietly in his arms, enjoying the unwonted luxury of emotional excitement, untroubled—almost—by the stinging gadflies of her thoughts. He had contrived to stimulate and then to soothe her to a point where the gadflies ceased to buzz. But they didn't disappear altogether. They just hovered quietly somewhere in the back of her head, and she was subconsciously aware of their presence. It was that subconscious awareness that made her whimper a little when Steve gently let her go.

"Oh, darling," she wailed, "don't leave me. I don't want you to go."

"I don't want to go, either, dear," he said, "but I have to, really. There's so much to do in these two

days. Just think, three days from now we'll be out on the high seas together, married!"

"Married." She echoed him. An involuntary tremor shook her.

"Good night, dearest." She clung to him.

"Oh, I don't want you to go."

"But I must. It's after three."

"All right. Go ahead." She laughed, and kissed him once again. Then she brought him his hat and coat and shoved him out the door.

"Beat it before I drag you back again." He kissed her and was gone. A second later he knocked on the door. She opened it.

"I just wanted to say good night again," he smiled. "Are you my own girl?"

"Yes," she said, and pushed him out again. His own girl. Not her own any more. She sat down in the wicker arm chair, feeling suddenly tired. She tried to figure out some plans for the morning. Should she go uptown first and tell her mother? Or should she go shopping? She would call Muriel first thing in the morning, and tell her. She'd be a great help in such an emergency, and she'd be glad that Elly'd come to her senses. Now she must get some sleep.

4

Sleep was impossible. She lay in bed and stared out the window and thought. The mood of high excitement gradually oozed out of her. She knew now why she'd been afraid to let Steve go. It was only his presence that had kept the buzzing gadflies away. Now they all came swarming back and stung with redoubled intensity.

The room became suddenly invested with a new value

—the room that summed up, really, all that she had fought and worked for, ever. It was there, alone, that she had come into possession of her soul. And now she was giving it up—leaving it behind—sailing for Europe, marrying.

It was funny, now that Steve was gone, Europe didn't seem quite so alluring. After all, just more places, other cities, with different streets and buildings. That was one of the things about belonging just to yourself. You didn't have to go anywhere. Or do anything. You had wonderful moments, unspoiled by anything. It occurred to her that whatever moments of absolutely unalloyed beauty and happiness she had ever known, had been in solitude—solitude of body and spirit.

She realized that once married, once a part of Steve's life, this would be gone. You simply couldn't have both yourself and love. It was paradoxical. Love meant giving, giving yourself all the time. Of course, in exchange for what you gave of yourself, you got a lot of somebody else. But it wasn't the same.

A terrible hand clutched at her heart. She was hot and cold in turns, and her teeth were chattering. What had she done! She felt exactly the way she had felt last summer at the beach, when in a gay mood she had climbed up on a high spring board, meaning to dive. When she had got out to the edge she couldn't dive. She was rooted there. She peered into the blackness of the water and simply couldn't move. She looked around. People were watching her. If she didn't dive they would laugh at her, say she was a coward. Well, she guessed she was. That kind of a coward. She didn't have the courage to dive into that water. But she did have the

courage to let people laugh at her, the courage to appear a bit ridiculous. That wasn't easy.

Now she had climbed up on another springboard, and as she looked into the water she knew, just as surely as she had known last summer, that she couldn't dive in. She didn't have the courage. Of course, all girls were scary just before they were married, but this was different. She wasn't ready to lose what she would lose, even to gain all she would gain. It would be hard to make people believe that. Funny, men did it all the time, and people understood it. But they'd never believe that a girl could care for a man a lot, and still not marry him because there was something—something so impossible to explain—she wanted more.

Looking at it now, an hour after he had left her, she couldn't imagine what had ever made her say she'd do it. She knew with an absolute certainty that she couldn't. This wasn't just another vacillation, either. It was definite. She couldn't give herself to anyone now, no matter what effect it might have on her future.

It wasn't easy. It was terrifically hard. She didn't want to lose him altogether, and she knew that if she let him go now it would mean losing him forever. She wouldn't blame him. She'd treated him abominably. He was too honorable, too, he'd never forgive her for breaking a promise. He wouldn't see that there was a certain kind of courage in that, that it was awfully hard. He would just see that she had gone back on her word, and he would hate her.

She'd be unhappy. She thought of all the things her sister had told her. The future. A lonely old age. Nothing to call her own. Nothing but her own integrity. Why should that mean so much to her? It was so con-

ceited, and so utterly selfish! But she couldn't help it. It wasn't a thing you could argue about. It just was. Maybe some time she'd be different. But now she was like this. She was deliberately throwing away her chances of happiness. Wantonly, for an idea. She knew it, and she didn't care—much. She'd rather be free than happy. Free. But was she free? Could you call yourself free when you were a slave to an idea? Was anybody ever free? If you were free of one thing, then weren't you a prisoner to something else?

She looked ahead and saw weeks of pain and loneliness. She'd miss him frightfully. She'd regret her decision a thousand times. But she knew it was the right one. She wasn't ready for the other thing yet. She had to be footloose, spiritually as well as actually. There'd be a penalty, of course. There always is, to everything. For everything you get, you pay. She was willing to pay with loneliness and suffering. Maybe she'd want the other later, but she didn't want it now. She'd have to work the thing out alone. In the final analysis you were thrown upon yourself. If you were like her you were, anyway.

She lay awake most of the night, thinking. The indecision was gone, and she was quite calm and sure of herself. Unhappy, but certain. Whatever it would cost her, she was going the way she should go. In the morning she wrote him a note. It was a hard thing to do. Nothing could sound right, nothing she could say could make her appear anything but contemptible, and an idiot. But she had to write it. She couldn't trust herself to see him again. She might not have the courage that way. She made a dozen starts, and finally evolved something presentable:

"My dear" [she wrote], "I know you'll hate me for being a quitter, and you have every right to hate me. I am a quitter, and I hate myself. But I just can't go through with it. I want to, but I can't. We'd both be miserable if I did, I'm simply paralyzed, that's all. And I know you won't believe me, but I have to say it, anyway. I love you. Only not enough, I guess. I suppose you'll say not enough is not at all. And you'll be right. You're always right. And I'm quite wrong, but it can't be helped. This is the way it had to be. After you come back, maybe we can be friends again."

She knew that was impossible, that she was cutting him off from her forever, but she had to put it in, because that was the way she felt. She gave the letter to a messenger boy, early in the morning.

"Be sure to deliver it only to this person," she told him, "and come back here after he's got it. Wait and see if there's an answer. But come back, anyway, even if there isn't." At ten o'clock the boy came back. She knew what he would say.

"There ain't no answer," he told her.

"Did you give it straight to Mr. Sayre?"

"Yeh, an' I ast him was there any answer an' he sez no." She gave him a coin and let him go.

That was that. There wouldn't be any answer, either. She was dead certain of that.

She got through the next two days somehow. Already the pain of being without him was pretty bad. She stayed away from the place as much as possible. She didn't even sleep there. The floor was being varnished, she told Muriel, and asked if she might sleep on the couch in the living room Wednesday and Thursday nights. She

managed to behave quite admirably, and Irving told Muriel he didn't think she was so crazy any more.

5

On Friday at noon the Paris sailed. At two o'clock she called up the Strauss office and asked for Mr. Sayre. The operator told her he had sailed for Europe. She couldn't have said why she did that. There wasn't any doubt in her mind that he had gone. But, somehow, she had to hear it officially before she could go back into the place. It would hurt so much up there.

She ate dinner alone. There were plenty of people she could have eaten with, but she wanted to be lonely. She wanted to bite on the sore tooth, to feel how it would be to always be alone. After dinner she walked slowly to the place. She looked rather eagerly in the letter-box. Not that she expected anything, but she had to look just the same.

The room was very still. It seemed a little strange, after being away for two days. She was conscious of a feeling about it something like the feeling that had possessed her when she first came to it. Her spirit was very sore and this was a healing place. She sat in her wicker armchair for a long, long time, looking at his picture on the desk. Suddenly she spoke aloud.

"Do you know," she said, "I don't believe I'll ever see you again. And I love you, really." Her eyes filled with tears. She felt very sorry for herself. It was a hard thing she had done. Suddenly she was thinking of Ted. Those words she had spoken aloud, hadn't she said them once before, about him? And she had lost him, and she had wanted to die. But after a while she had recovered. She would always recover. This would

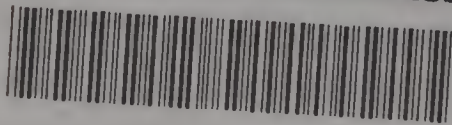
hurt for a while, too, but afterward it would stop, and she would belong only to herself again.

The door, which was a little warped, creaked on its hinges. It hadn't been quite shut when she came in. She got up, opened it wide, and slammed it loudly. She sat down in her armchair again, sighing. The peace that had once been so palpable a part of the room slowly gathered again and enveloped her. She and peace were in that room, and the rest of the world was shut outside.

THE END

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